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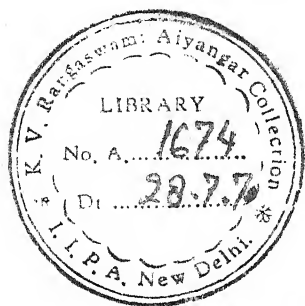
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# RENAISSANCE IN ITALY.

BY  
JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS

VOLUME I

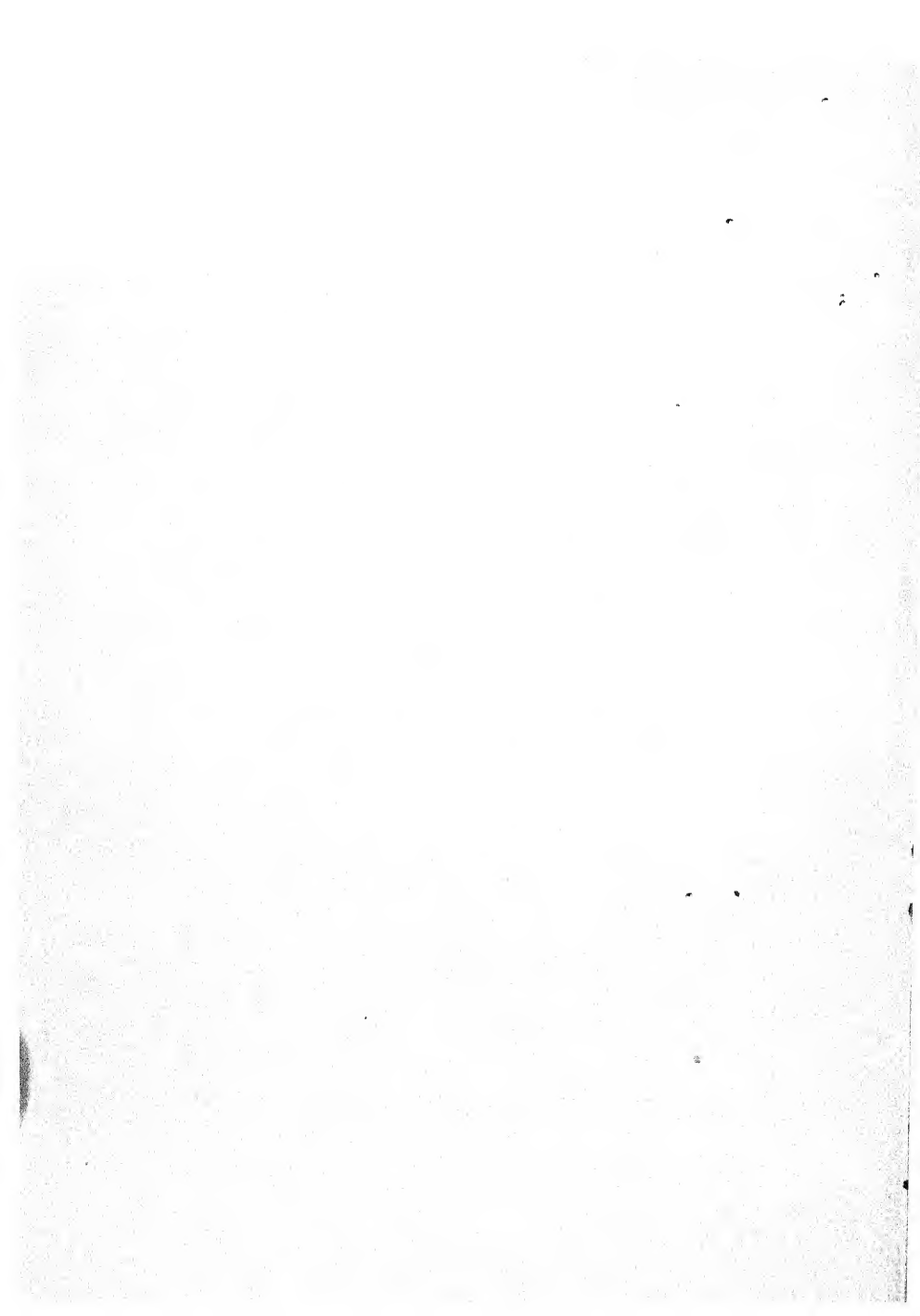


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TO  
MY FRIEND  
JOHN BEDDOE, M.D., F.R.S.  
I DEDICATE MY WORK  
ON  
THE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE



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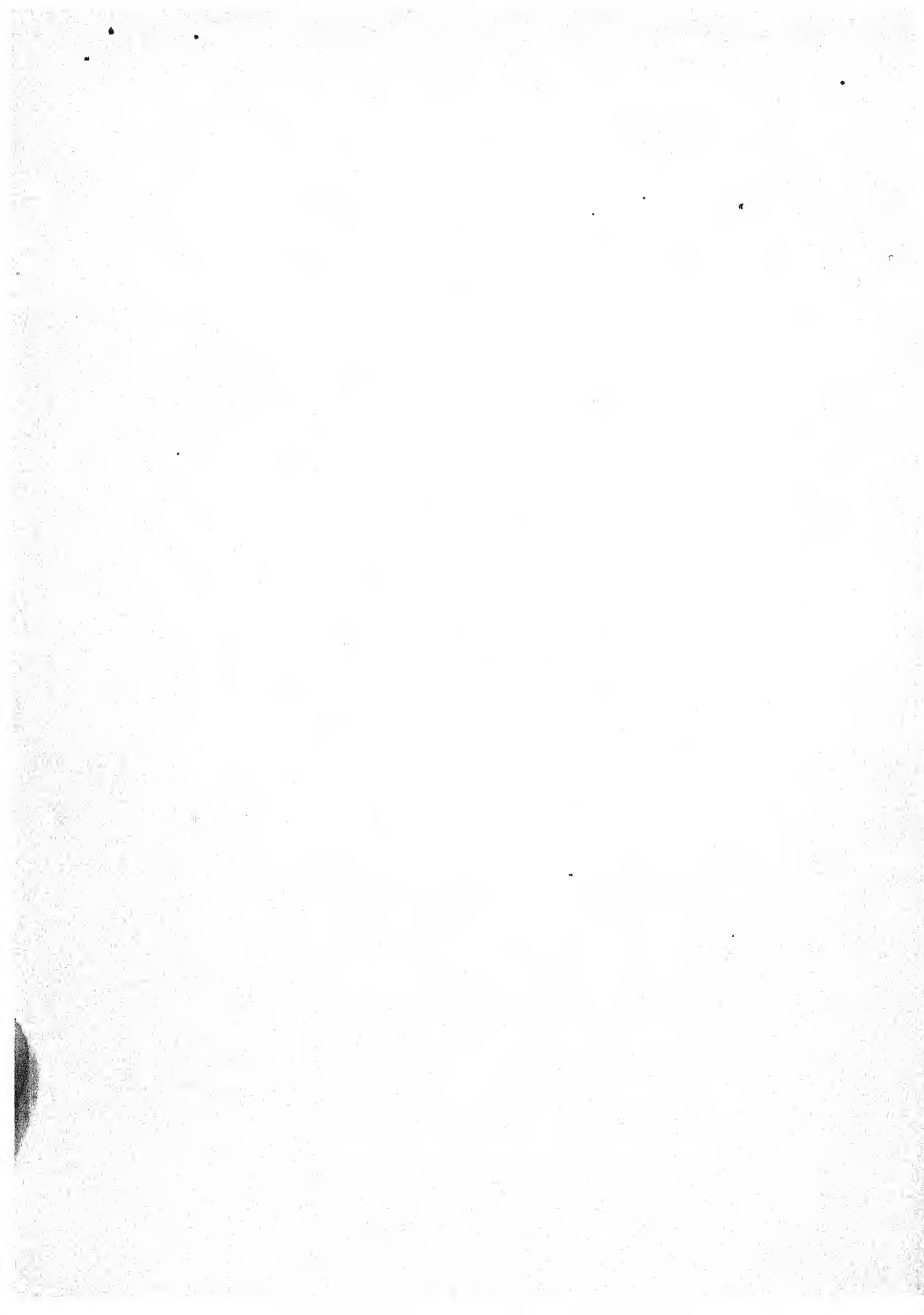
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## THE AGE OF THE DESPOTS

'Di questi adunque oziosi principi, e di queste vilissime armi, sarà piena la mia istoria'—MACH. *Ist. Fior.* lib. 1.



## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION\*

THIS volume is the First Part of a work upon the 'Renaissance in Italy.' The Second Part treats of the Revival of Learning. The Third, of the Fine Arts. These have been already published. The Fourth Part will be devoted to Italian Literature.

Owing to the extent of the ground I have attempted to traverse, I feel conscious that the students of special departments will find much to be desired in my handling of each part. In some respects I hope that the several portions of the work may complete and illustrate each other. Many topics, for example, have been omitted from Chapter VIII. in this volume because they seemed better adapted to treatment in the future.

One of the chief difficulties which the critic has to meet in dealing with the Italian Renaissance is the determination of the limits of the epoch. Two dates, 1453 and 1527, marking respectively the fall of Constantinople and the sack of Rome, are convenient for fixing in the mind that narrow space of time during which the Renaissance culminated. But in order to trace its progress up to this point, it is necessary to go back to a far more remote period; nor, again, is it possible to maintain strict chronological consistency in treating of the several branches of the whole theme.

The books of which the most frequent use has been made in this first portion of the work are Sismondi's '*Républiques Italiennes*;' Muratori's '*Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*;' the '*Archivio Storico Italiano*;' the seventh volume of Michelet's '*Historie de France*;' the seventh and eighth volumes of Gregorovius' '*Geschichte der Stadt Rom*;' Ferrari's '*Rivoluzioni d' Itali*;' Alberi's series of Despatches; Gino Capponi's '*Storia della Repubblica di Firenze*;' and Burckhardt's '*Cultur der Renaissance in Italien*.' To the last-named essay I must acknowledge especial obligations. It fell under my notice when I had planned, and in a great measure finished, my own work. But it would be difficult for me to exaggerate the profit I have derived from the comparison of my opinions with those of a writer so thorough in his learning and so delicate in his perceptions as Jacob Burckhardt, or the amount I owe to his acute and philosophical handling of the whole

\*PUBLISHER'S NOTE.—This Preface was prefixed to the second edition of this volume when it was issued independently.

## PREFACE

subject. I must also express a special debt to Ferrari, many of whose views I have adopted in the Chapter on 'Italian History,' written for the second edition of this volume. With regard to the alterations introduced into the substance of the book in this edition, it will be enough to say that I have endeavoured to bring each chapter up to the level of present knowledge.

In conclusion, I once more ask indulgence for a volume which, though it aims at a completeness of its own, is professedly but one part of a long inquiry.

## CHAPTER I

### THE SPIRIT OF THE RENAISSANCE

*Difficulty of fixing Date—Meaning of word Renaissance—The Emancipation of the Reason—Relation of Feudalism to the Renaissance—Medieval Warnings of the Renaissance—Abelard, Bacon, Joachim of Flora, the Provençals, the Heretics, Frederick II.—Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio—Physical Energy of the Italians—The Revival of Learning—The Double Discovery of the World and of Man—Exploration of the Universe and of the Globe—Science—The Fine Arts and Scholarship—Art Humanises the Conceptions of the Church—Three Stages in the History of Scholarship—The Age of Desire—The Age of Acquisition—The Legend of Julia's Corpse—The Age of the Printers and Critics—The Emancipation of the Conscience—The Reformation and the Modern Critical Spirit—Mechanical Inventions—the Place of Italy in the Renaissance.*

THE word Renaissance has of late years received a more extended significance than that which is implied in our English equivalent—the Revival of Learning. We use it to denote the whole transition from the Middle Ages to the Modern World; and though it is possible to assign certain limits to the period during which this transition took place, we cannot fix on any dates so positively as to say—between this year and that the movement was accomplished. To do so would be like trying to name the days on which spring in any particular season began and ended. Yet we speak of spring as different from winter and from summer. The truth is, that in many senses we are still in mid-Renaissance. The evolution has not been completed. The new life is our own and is progressive. As in the transformation scene of some great Masque, so here the waning and the waxing shapes are mingled; the new forms, at first shadowy and filmy, gain upon the old; and now both blend; and now the old scene fades into the background; still, who shall say whether the new scene be finally set up?

In like manner we cannot refer the whole phenomena of the Renaissance to any one cause or circumstance, or limit them within the field of any one department of human knowledge. If we ask the students of art what they mean by the Renaissance, they will reply that it was the revolution effected in architecture, painting, and sculpture by the recovery of antique monuments. Students of literature, philosophy, and theology see in the Renaissance that discovery of manuscripts, that passion for antiquity, that progress in philology and criticism, which led to a correct knowledge of the classics, to a fresh taste in poetry, to new systems of thought, to more accurate analysis, and finally to the Lutheran schism and the emancipation of the conscience. Men of



science will discourse about the discovery of the solar system by Copernicus and Galileo, the anatomy of Vesalius, and Harvey's theory of the circulation of the blood. The origination of a truly scientific method is the point which interests them most in the Renaissance. The political historian, again, has his own answer to the question. The extinction of feudalism, the development of the great nationalities of Europe, the growth of monarchy, the limitation of the ecclesiastical authority and the erection of the Papacy into an Italian kingdom, and in the last place the gradual emergence of that sense of popular freedom which exploded in the Revolution; these are the aspects of the movement which engross his attention. Jurists will describe the dissolution of legal fictions based upon the False Decretals, the acquisition of a true text of the Roman Code, and the attempt to introduce a rational method into the theory of modern jurisprudence, as well as to commence the study of international law. Men whose attention has been turned to the history of discoveries and inventions will relate the exploration of America and the East, or will point to the benefits conferred upon the world by the arts of printing and engraving, by the compass and the telescope, by paper and by gunpowder; and will insist that at the moment of the Renaissance all these instruments of mechanical utility started into existence, to aid the dissolution of what was rotten and must perish, to strengthen and perpetuate the new and useful and life-giving. Yet neither any one of these answers taken separately, nor indeed all of them together, will offer a solution of the problem. By the term Renaissance, or new birth, is indicated a natural movement, not to be explained by this or that characteristic, but to be accepted as an effort of humanity for which at length the time had come, and in the onward progress of which we still participate. The history of the Renaissance is not the history of arts, or of sciences, or of literature, or even of nations. It is the history of the attainment of self-conscious freedom by the human spirit manifested in the European races. It is no mere political mutation, no new fashion of art, no restoration of classical standards of taste. The arts and the inventions, the knowledge and the books, which suddenly became vital at the time of the Renaissance, had long lain neglected on the shores of the Dead Sea which we call the Middle Ages. It was not their discovery which caused the Renaissance. But it was the intellectual energy, the spontaneous outburst of intelligence, which enabled mankind at that moment to make use of them. The force then generated still continues, vital and expansive, in the spirit of the modern world.

How was it, then, that at a certain period, about fourteen centuries after Christ, to speak roughly, the intellect of the Western races awoke as it were from slumber and began once more to be active? That is a question which we can but imperfectly answer. The mystery of organic life defeats analysis; whether the subject of our inquiry be a germ-cell, or a phenomenon so complex as the commencement of a new religion, or the origination of a new disease, or a new phase in civilisation, it is

alike impossible to do more than to state the conditions under which the fresh growth begins, and to point out what are its manifestations. In doing so, moreover, we must be careful not to be carried away by words of our own making. Renaissance, Reformation, and Revolution are not separate things, capable of being isolated; they are moments in the history of the human race which we find it convenient to name; while history itself is one and continuous, so that our utmost endeavours to regard some portion of it independently of the rest will be defeated.

A glance at the history of the preceding centuries shows that, after the dissolution of the fabric of the Roman Empire, there was no immediate possibility of any intellectual revival. The barbarous races which had deluged Europe had to absorb their barbarism: the fragments of Roman civilisation had either to be destroyed or assimilated: the Germanic nations had to receive culture and religion from the people they had superseded; the Church had to be created, and a new form given to the old idea of the Empire. It was further necessary that the modern nationalities should be defined, that the modern languages should be formed, that peace should be secured to some extent, and wealth accumulated, before the indispensable conditions for a resurrection of the free spirit of humanity could exist. The first nation which fulfilled these conditions was the first to inaugurate the new era. The reason why Italy took the lead in the Renaissance was, that Italy possessed a language, a favourable climate, political freedom, and commercial prosperity, at a time when other nations were still semi-barbarous. Where the human spirit had been buried in the decay of the Roman Empire, there it arose upon the ruins of that Empire; and the Papacy, called by Hobbes the ghost of the dead Roman Empire, seated, throned and crowned, upon the ashes thereof, to some extent bridged over the gulf between the two periods.

Keeping steadily in sight the truth that the real quality of the Renaissance was intellectual, that it was the emancipation of the reason for the modern world, we may inquire how feudalism was related to it. The mental condition of the Middle Ages was one of ignorant prostration before the idols of the Church—dogma and authority and scholasticism. Again, the nations of Europe during these centuries were bound down by the brute weight of material necessities. Without the power over the outer world which the physical sciences and useful arts communicate, without the ease of life which wealth and plenty secure, without the traditions of a civilised past, emerging slowly from a state of utter rawness, each nation could barely do more than gain and keep a difficult hold upon existence. To depreciate the work achieved during the Middle Ages would be ridiculous. Yet we may point out that it was done unconsciously—that it was a gradual and instinctive process of becoming. The reason, in one word, was not awake; the mind of man was ignorant of its own treasures and its own capacities. It is pathetic to think of the mediæval students poring over a single ill-translated sentence of Porphyry, endeavouring to extract from its clauses

whole systems of logical science, and torturing their brains about puzzles hardly less idle than the dilemma of Buridan's donkey, while all the time, at Constantinople and at Seville, in Greek and Arabic, Plato and Aristotle were alive but sleeping, awaiting only the call of the Renaissance to bid them speak with voice intelligible to the modern mind. It is no less pathetic to watch tide after tide of the ocean of humanity sweeping from all parts of Europe, to break in passionate but unavailing foam upon the shores of Palestine, whole nations laying life down for the chance of seeing the walls of Jerusalem, worshipping the sepulchre whence Christ had risen, loading their fleet with relics and with cargoes of the sacred earth, while all the time within their breasts and brains the spirit of the Lord was with them, living but unrecognised, the spirit of freedom which ere long was destined to restore its birthright to the world. Meanwhile the middle age accomplished its own work. Slowly and obscurely, amid stupidity and ignorance, were being forged the nations and the languages of Europe. Italy, France, Spain, England, Germany took shape. The actors of the future drama acquired their several characters, and formed the tongues whereby their personalities should be expressed. The qualities which render modern society different from that of the ancient world were being impressed upon these nations by Christianity, by the Church, by chivalry, by feudal customs. Then came a further phase. After the nations had been moulded, their monarchies and dynasties were established. Feudalism passed by slow degrees into various forms of more or less defined autocracy. In Italy and Germany numerous principalities sprang into pre-eminence; and though the nation was not united under one head, the monarchical principle was acknowledged. France and Spain submitted to a despotism, by right of which the king could say, '*L'Etat c'est moi.*' England developed her complicated constitution of popular right and royal prerogative. At the same time the Latin Church underwent a similar process of transformation. The Papacy became more autocratic. Like the king, the Pope began to say, '*L'Eglise c'est moi.*' This merging of the mediæval State and mediæval Church in the personal supremacy of King and Pope may be termed the special feature of the last age of feudalism which preceded the Renaissance. It was thus that the necessary conditions and external circumstances were prepared. The organisation of the five great nations, and the levelling of the political and spiritual interests under political and spiritual despots, formed the prelude to that drama of liberty of which the Renaissance was the first act, the Reformation the second, the Revolution the third, and which we nations of the present are still evolving in the establishment of the democratic idea.

Meanwhile, it must not be imagined that the Renaissance burst suddenly upon the world in the fifteenth century without premonitory symptoms. Far from that: within the middle age itself, over and over again, the reason strove to break loose from its fetters. Abelard, in the twelfth century, tried to prove that the interminable dispute about en-

ties and words was founded on a misapprehension. Roger Bacon, at the beginning of the thirteenth century, anticipated modern science, and proclaimed that man, by use of nature, can do all things. Joachim of Flora, intermediate between the two, drank one drop of the cup of prophecy offered to his lips and cried that 'the Gospel of the Father was past, the Gospel of the Son was passing, the Gospel of the Spirit was to be.' These three men, each in his own way, the Frenchman as a logician, the Englishman as an analyst, the Italian as a mystic, divined the future but inevitable emancipation of the reason of mankind. Nor were there wanting signs, especially in Provence, that Aphrodite and Phœbus and the Graces were ready to resume their sway. The premature civilisation of that favoured region, so cruelly extinguished by the Church, was itself a reaction of nature against the restrictions imposed by ecclesiastical discipline; while the songs of the wandering students, known under the title of *Carmina Burana*, indicate a revival of Pagan or pre-Christian feeling in the very stronghold of mediæval learning. We have, moreover, to remember the Cathari, the Paterini, the Fraticelli, the Albigenses, the Hussites—heretics in whom the new light dimly shone, but who were instantly exterminated by the Church. We have to commemorate the vast conception of the Emperor Frederick II., who strove to found a new society of humane culture in the South of Europe, and to anticipate the advent of the spirit of modern tolerance. He, too, and all his race were exterminated by the Papal jealousy. Truly we may say with Michelet that the Sibyl of the Renaissance kept offering her books in vain to feudal Europe. In vain because the time was not yet. The ideas projected thus early on the modern world were immature and abortive, like those headless trunks and zoophitic members of half-moulded humanity which, in the vision of Empedocles, preceded the birth of full-formed man. The nations were not ready. Franciscans imprisoning Roger Bacon for venturing to examine what God had meant to keep secret; Dominicans preaching crusades against the cultivated nobles of Toulouse; Popes stamping out the seed of enlightened Frederick; Benedictines erasing the masterpieces of classical literature to make way for their own litanies and luries, or selling pieces of the parchment for charms; a laity devoted by superstition to saints and by sorcery to the devil; a clergy sunk in sensual sloth or fevered with demoniac zeal: these still ruled the intellectual destinies of Europe. Therefore the first anticipations of the Renaissance were fragmentary and stérile.

Then came a second period. Dante's poem, a work of conscious art, conceived in a modern spirit and written in a modern tongue, was the first true sign that Italy, the leader of the nations of the West, had shaken off her sleep. Petrarch followed. His ideal of antique culture as the everlasting solace and the universal education of the human race, his lifelong effort to recover the classical harmony of thought and speech, gave a direct impulse to one of the chief movements of the

Renaissance—its passionate outgoing toward the ancient world. After Petrarch, Boccaccio opened yet another channel for the stream of freedom. His conception of human existence as joy to be accepted with thanksgiving, not as a gloomy error to be rectified by suffering, familiarised the fourteenth century with that form of semi-pagan gladness which marked the real Renaissance.

In Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio Italy recovered the consciousness of intellectual liberty. What we call the Renaissance had not yet arrived; but their achievement rendered its appearance in due season certain. With Dante the genius of the modern world dared to stand alone and to create confidently after its own fashion. With Petrarch the same genius reached forth across the gulf of darkness, resuming the tradition of a splendid past. With Boccaccio the same genius proclaimed the beauty of the world, the goodliness of youth and strength of love and life, unterrified by hell, unappalled by the shadow of impending death.

It was now, at the beginning of the fourteenth century, when Italy had lost indeed the heroic spirit which we admire in her Communes of the thirteenth, but had gained instead ease, wealth, magnificence, and that repose which springs from long prosperity, that the new age at last began. Europe was, as it were, a fallow field, beneath which lay buried the civilisation of the old world. Behind stretched the centuries of mediævalism, intellectually barren and inert. Of the future there were as yet but faint foreshadowings. Meanwhile, the force of the nations who were destined to achieve the coming transformation was unexhausted; their physical and mental faculties were unimpaired. No ages of enervating luxury, of intellectual endeavour, of life artificially preserved or ingeniously prolonged, had sapped the fibre of the men who were about to inaugurate the modern world. Severely nurtured, unused to delicate living, these giants of the Renaissance were like boys in their capacity for endurance, their inordinate appetite for enjoyment. No generations, hungry, sickly, effete, critical, disillusioned, trod them down. Ennui and the fatigue that springs from scepticism, the despair of thwarted effort, were unknown. Their fresh and unperverted senses rendered them keenly alive to what was beautiful and natural. They yearned for magnificence, and instinctively comprehended splendour. At the same time the period of satiety was still far off. Everything seemed possible to their young energy; nor had a single pleasure palled upon their appetite. Born, as it were, at the moment when desires and faculties are evenly balanced, when the perceptions are not blunted nor the senses cloyed, opening their eyes for the first time on a world of wonder, these men of the Renaissance enjoyed what we may term the first transcendent springtide of the modern world. Nothing is more remarkable than the fulness of the life that throbbed in them. Natures rich in all capacities and endowed with every kind of sensibility were frequent. Nor was there any limit to the play of personality in action.

We may apply to them what Mr. Browning has written of Sordello's temperament:

A footfall there  
Suffices to upturn to the warm air  
Half germinating spices, mere decay  
Produces richer life, and day by day  
New pollen on the lily-petal grows,  
And still more labyrinthine buds the rose.

During the Middle Ages man had lived enveloped in a cowl. He had not seen the beauty of the world, or had seen it only to cross himself, and turn aside and tell his beads and pray. Like S. Bernard travelling along the shores of the Lake Leman, and noticing neither the azure of the waters, nor the luxuriance of the vines, nor the radiance of the mountains with their robe of sun and snow, but bending a thought-burdened forehead over the neck of his mule; even like this monk, humanity had passed, a careful pilgrim, intent on the terrors of sin, death, and judgment, along the highways of the world, and had scarcely known that they were sightworthy or that life is a blessing. Beauty is a snare, pleasure a sin, the world a fleeting show, man fallen and lost, death the only certainty, judgment inevitable, hell everlasting, heaven hard to win; ignorance is acceptable to God as a proof of faith and submission; abstinence and mortification are the only safe rules of life: these were the fixed ideas of the ascetic mediæval Church. The Renaissance shattered and destroyed them, rending the thick veil which they had drawn between the mind of man and the outer world, and flashing the light of reality upon the darkened places of his own nature. For the mystic teaching of the Church was substituted culture in the classical humanities; a new ideal was established, whereby man strove to make himself the monarch of the globe on which it is his privilege as well as destiny to live. The Renaissance was the liberation of the reason from a dungeon, the double discovery of the outer and the inner world.

An external event determined the direction which this outburst of the spirit of freedom should take. This was the contact of the modern with the ancient mind which followed upon what is called the Revival of Learning. The fall of the Greek Empire in 1453, while it signalled the extinction of the old order, gave an impulse to the now accumulated forces of the new. A belief in the identity of the human spirit under all previous manifestations and in its uninterrupted continuity was generated. Men found that in classical as well as Biblical antiquity existed an ideal of human life, both moral and intellectual, by which they might profit in the present. The modern genius felt confidence in its own energies when it learned what the ancients had achieved. The guesses of the ancients stimulated the exertions of the moderns. The whole world's history seemed once more to be one.

The great achievements of the Renaissance were the discovery of the

world and the discovery of man.<sup>1</sup> Under these two formulæ may be classified all the phenomena which properly belong to this period. The discovery of the world divides itself into two branches—the exploration of the globe, and that systematic exploration of the universe which is in fact what we call Science. Columbus made known America in 1492; the Portuguese rounded the Cape in 1497; Copernicus explained the solar system in 1507. It is not necessary to add anything to this plain statement; for, in contact with facts of such momentous import, to avoid what seems like commonplace reflection would be difficult. Yet it is only when we contrast the ten centuries which preceded these dates with the four centuries which have ensued, that we can estimate the magnitude of that Renaissance movement by means of which a new hemisphere has been added to civilisation. In like manner, it is worth while to pause a moment and consider what is implied in the substitution of the Copernican for the Ptolemaic system. The world, regarded in old times as the centre of all things, the apple of God's eye, for the sake of which were created sun and moon and stars, suddenly was found to be one of the many balls that roll around a giant sphere of light and heat, which is itself but one among innumerable suns attended each by a cortège of planets, and scattered, how we know not, through infinity. What has become of the brazen seat of the old gods, that Paradise to which an ascending Deity might be caught up through clouds, and hidden for a moment from the eyes of His disciples? The demonstration of the simplest truths of astronomy destroyed at a blow the legends that were most significant to the early Christians by annihilating their symbolism. Well might the Church persecute Galileo for his proof of the world's mobility. Instinctively she perceived that in this one proposition was involved the principle of hostility to her most cherished conceptions, to the very core of her mythology. Science was born, and the warfare between scientific positivism and religious metaphysic was declared. Henceforth God could not be worshipped under the forms and idols of a sacerdotal fancy; a new meaning had been given to the words; 'God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.' The reason of man was at last able to study the scheme of the universe, of which he is a part, and to ascertain the actual laws by which it is governed. Three centuries and a half have elapsed since Copernicus revolutionised astronomy. It is only by reflecting on the mass of knowledge we have since acquired, knowledge not only infinitely curious but also incalculably useful in its application to the arts of life, and then considering how much ground of this kind was acquired in the ten centuries which preceded the Renaissance, that we are at all able to estimate the expansive force which was then generated. Science, rescued from the hand of astrology, geomancy, alchemy, began her real life with the Renaissance. Since then, as far as to the present moment, she has never ceased to grow. Pro-

<sup>1</sup> It is to Michelet that we owe these formulæ, which have passed into the language of history.



gressive and durable, Science may be called the first-born of the spirit of the modern world.

Thus by the discovery of the world is meant on the one hand the appropriation by civilised humanity of all corners of the habitable globe, and on the other the conquest by Science of all that we now know about the nature of the universe. In the discovery of man, again, it is possible to trace a two-fold process. Man in his temporal relations, illustrated by Pagan antiquity, and man in his spiritual relations, illustrated by Biblical antiquity; these are the two regions, at first apparently distinct, afterwards found to be interpenetrative, which the critical and inquisitive genius of the Renaissance opened for investigation. In the former of these regions we find two agencies at work, art and scholarship. During the Middle Ages the plastic arts, like philosophy, had degenerated into barren and meaningless scholasticism—a frigid reproduction of lifeless forms copied technically and without inspiration from debased patterns. Pictures became symbolically connected with the religious feelings of the people, formulæ from which to deviate would be impious in the artist and confusing to the worshipper. Superstitious reverence bound the painter to copy the almond eyes and stiff joints of the saints whom he had adored from infancy; and, even had it been otherwise, he lacked the skill to imitate the natural forms he saw around him. But with the dawning of the Renaissance a new spirit in the arts arose. Men began to conceive that the human body is noble in itself and worthy of patient study. The object of the artist then became to unite devotional feeling and respect for the sacred legend with the utmost beauty and the utmost fidelity of delineation. He studied from the nude; he drew the body in every posture; he composed drapery, invented attitudes, and adapted the action of his figures and the expression of his faces to the subject he had chosen. In a word, he humanised the altar-pieces and the cloister-frescoes upon which he worked. In this way the painters rose above the ancient symbols, and brought heaven down to earth. By drawing Madonna and her Son like living human beings, by dramatising the Christian history, they silently substituted the love of beauty and the interests of actual life for the principles of the Church. The saint or angel became an occasion for the display of physical perfection, and to introduce ‘*un bel corpo ignudo*’ into the composition was of more moment to them than to represent the macerations of the Magdalen. Men thus learned to look beyond the relique and the host, and to forget the dogma in the lovely forms which gave it expression. Finally, when the classics came to aid this work of progress, a new world of thought and fancy, divinely charming, wholly human, was revealed to their astonished eyes. Thus art, which had begun by humanising the legends of the Church, diverted the attention of its students from the legend to the work of beauty, and lastly, severing itself from the religious tradition, became the exponent of the majesty and splendour of the human body. This final emancipation of art from ecclesiastical trammels culminated in the great age of Italian painting.



Gazing at Michael Angelo's prophets in the Sistine Chapel, we are indeed in contact with ideas originally religious. But the treatment of these ideas is purely, broadly human, on a level with that of the sculpture of Pheidias. Titian's Virgin received into Heaven, soaring midway between the archangel who descends to crown her and the apostles who yearn to follow her, is far less a Madonna Assunta than the apotheosis of humanity conceived as a radiant mother. Throughout the picture there is nothing ascetic, nothing mystic, nothing devotional. Nor did the art of the Renaissance stop here. It went further, and plunged into Paganism. Sculptors and painters combined with architects to cut the arts loose from their connection with the Church by introducing a spirit and a sentiment alien to Christianity.

Through the instrumentality of art, and of all the ideas which art introduced into daily life, the Renaissance wrought for the modern world a real resurrection of the body, which, since the destruction of antique civilisation, had lain swathed up in hair-shirts and cerements within the tomb of the mediæval cloister. It was scholarship which revealed to men the wealth of their own minds, the dignity of human thought, the value of human speculation, the importance of human life regarded as a thing apart from religious rules and dogmas. During the Middle Ages a few students had possessed the poems of Virgil and the prose of Boethius—and Virgil at Mantua, Boethius at Pavia, had actually been honoured as saints—together with fragments of Lucan, Ovid, Statius, Juvenal, Cicero, and Horace. The Renaissance opened to the whole reading public the treasure-houses of Greek and Latin literature. At the same time the Bible in its original tongues was rediscovered. Mines of Oriental learning were laid bare for the students of the Jewish and Arabic traditions. The Aryan and Semitic revelations were for the first time subjected to something like a critical comparison. With unerring instinct the men of the Renaissance named the voluminous subject-matter of scholarship '*Litteræ Humaniores*'—the more human literature, or the literature that humanises.

There are three stages in the history of scholarship during the Renaissance. The first is the age of passionate desire; Petrarch poring over a Homer he could not understand, and Boccaccio in his maturity learning Greek, in order that he might drink from the well-head of poetic inspiration, are the heroes of this period. They inspired the Italians with a thirst for antique culture. Next comes the age of acquisition and of libraries. Nicholas V., who founded the Vatican Library in 1453, Cosmo de' Medici who began the Medicean Collection a little earlier, and Poggio Bracciolini, who ransacked all the cities and convents of Europe for manuscripts, together with the teachers of Greek, who in the first half of the fifteenth century escaped from Constantinople with precious freights of classic literature, are the heroes of this second period. It was an age of accumulation, of uncritical and indiscriminate enthusiasm. Manuscripts were worshipped by these men, just as the reliques of Holy Land had been adored by their great-grand-

fathers. The eagerness of the Crusades was revived in this quest of the Holy Grail of ancient knowledge. Waifs and strays of Pagan authors were valued like precious gems, revelled in like odoriferous and gorgeous flowers, consulted like oracles of God, gazed on like the eyes of a beloved mistress. The good, the bad, and the indifferent received an almost equal homage. Criticism had not yet begun. The world was bent on gathering up its treasures, frantically bewailing the lost books of Livy, the lost songs of Sappho—absorbing to intoxication the strong wine of multitudinous thoughts and passions that kept pouring from those long-buried amphoræ of inspiration. What is most remarkable about this age of scholarship is the enthusiasm which pervaded all classes in Italy for antique culture. Popes and princes, captains of adventure and peasants, noble ladies and the leaders of the demi-monde, alike became scholars. There is a story told by Infessura which illustrates the temper of the times with singular felicity. On the 18th of April, 1485, a report circulated in Rome that some Lombard workmen had discovered a Roman sarcophagus while digging on the Appian Way. It was a marble tomb, engraved with the inscription, 'Julia, daughter of Claudius,' and inside the coffer lay the body of a most beautiful girl of fifteen years, preserved by precious unguents from corruption and the injury of time. The bloom of youth was still upon her cheeks and lips; her eyes and mouth were half open; her long hair floated round her shoulders. She was instantly removed, so goes the legend, to the Capitol; and then began a procession of pilgrims from all the quarters of Rome to gaze upon this saint of the old Pagan world. In the eyes of those enthusiastic worshippers, her beauty was beyond imagination or description: she was far fairer than any woman of the modern age could hope to be. At last Innocent VIII. feared lest the orthodox faith should suffer by this new cult of a heathen corpse. Julia was buried secretly and at night by his direction, and naught remained in the Capitol but her empty marble coffin. The tale, as told by Infessura, is repeated in Matarazzo and in Nantiporto with slight variations. One says that the girl's hair was yellow, another that it was of the glossiest black. What foundation for the legend may really have existed need not here be questioned. Let us rather use the mythus as a parable of the ecstatic devotion which prompted the men of that age to discover a form of unimaginable beauty in the tomb of the classic world.<sup>2</sup>

Then came the third age of scholarship—the age of the critics, philologists, and printers. What had been collected by Poggio and Aurispa had now to be explained by Ficino, Poliziano, and Erasmus. They began their task by digesting and arranging the contents of the libraries. There were then no short cuts to learning, no comprehensive lexicons,

<sup>2</sup> The most remarkable document regarding the body of Julia which has yet been published is a Latin letter, written by Bartholomæus Fontius to his friend Franciscus Saxethus, minutely describing her, with details which appear to prove that he had not only seen but handled the corpse. It is printed in Janitschek, *Die Gesellschaft der R. in It.*: Stuttgart, 1879, p. 120.

no dictionaries of antiquities, no carefully prepared thesauri of mythology and history. Each student had to hold in his brain the whole mass of classical erudition. The text and the canon of Homer, Plato, Aristotle, and the tragedians had to be decided. Greek type had to be struck. Florence, Venice, Basle, Lyons, and Paris groaned with printing-presses. The Aldi, the Stephani, and Froben toiled by night and day, employing scores of scholars, men of supreme devotion and of mighty brain, whose work it was to ascertain the right reading of sentences, to accentuate, to punctuate, to commit to the press, and to place beyond the reach of monkish hatred or of envious time that everlasting solace of humanity which exists in the classics. All subsequent achievements in the field of scholarship sink into insignificance beside the labours of these men, who needed genius, enthusiasm, and the sympathy of Europe for the accomplishment of their titanic task. Virgil was printed in 1470, Homer in 1488, Aristotle in 1498, Plato in 1513. They then became the inalienable heritage of mankind. But what vigils, what anxious expenditure of thought, what agonies of doubt and expectation, were endured by those heroes of humanising scholarship, whom we are apt to think of merely as pedants! Which of us now warms and thrills with emotion at hearing the name of Aldus Manutius, or of Henricus Stephanus, or of Johannes Froben? Yet this we surely ought to do; for to them we owe in a great measure the freedom of our spirit, our stores of intellectual enjoyment, our command of the past, our certainty of the future of human culture.

This third age in the history of the Renaissance Scholarship may be said to have reached its climax in Erasmus; for by this time Italy had handed on the torch of learning to the northern nations. The publication of his 'Adagia' in 1500 marks the advent of a more critical and selective spirit, which from that date onward has been gradually gaining strength in the modern mind. Criticism, in the true sense of accurate testing and sifting, is one of the points which distinguish the moderns from the ancients; and criticism was developed by the process of assimilation, comparison, and appropriation, which was necessary in the growth of scholarship. The ultimate effect of this recovery of classic literature was, once and for all, to liberate the intellect. The modern world was brought into close contact with the free virility of the ancient world, and emancipated from the thralldom of unproved traditions. The force to judge and the desire to create were generated. The immediate result in the sixteenth century was an abrupt secession of the learned, not merely from monasticism, but also from the true spirit of Christianity. The minds of the Italians assimilated Paganism. In their hatred of mediæval ignorance, in their loathing of cowed and cloistered fools, they flew to an extreme, and affected the manner of an irrevocable past. This extravagance led of necessity to a reaction—in the north to Puritanism, in the south to what has been termed the Counter-Reformation effected under Spanish influences in the Latin Church. But Christianity, that most precious possession of the modern world,

was never seriously imperilled by the classical enthusiasm of the Renaissance; nor, on the other hand, was the progressive emancipation of the reason materially retarded by the reaction it produced.

The transition at this point to the third branch in the discovery of man, the revelation to the consciousness of its own spiritual freedom, is natural. Not only did scholarship restore the classics and encourage literary criticism; it also restored the text of the Bible, and encouraged theological criticism. In the wake of theological freedom followed a free philosophy, no longer subject to the dogmas of the Church. To purge the Christian faith from false conceptions, to liberate with conscience from the tyranny of priests, and to interpret religion to the reason, has been the work of the last centuries; nor is this work as yet by any means accomplished. On the one side Descartes and Bacon, Spinoza and Locke, are sons of the Renaissance, champions of new-found philosophical freedom; on the other side, Luther is a son of the Renaissance, the herald of new-found religious freedom. The whole movement of the Reformation is a phase in that accelerated action of the modern mind which at its commencement we call the Renaissance. It is a mistake to regard the Reformation as an isolated phenomenon or as a mere effort to restore the Church to purity. The Reformation exhibits in the region of religious thought and national politics what the Renaissance displays in the sphere of culture, art, and science—the recovered energy and freedom of the reason. We are too apt to treat of history in parcels, and to attempt to draw lessons from detached chapters in the biography of the human race. To observe the connection between the several stages of a progressive movement of the human spirit, and to recognise that the forces at work are still active, is the true philosophy of history.

The Reformation, like the revival of science and of culture, had its mediæval anticipations and foreshadowings. The heretics whom the Church successfully combated in North Italy, France, and Bohemia were the precursors of Luther. The scholars prepared the way in the fifteenth century. Teachers of Hebrew, founders of Hebrew type—Reuchlin in Germany, Alexander in Paris, Von Hutten as a pamphleteer, and Erasmus as a humanist—contribute each a definite momentum. Luther, for his part, incarnates the spirit of revolt against tyrannical authority, urges the necessity of a return to the essential truth of Christianity, as distinguished from the idols of the Church, and asserts the right of the individual to judge, interpret, criticise, and construct opinion for himself. The veil which the Church had interposed between the human soul and God was broken down. The freedom of the conscience was established. Thus the principles involved in what we call the Reformation were momentous. Connected on the one side with scholarship and the study of texts, it opened the path for modern Biblical criticism. Connected on the other side with the intolerance of mere authority, it led to what has since been named rationalism—the attempt to reconcile the religious tradition with the reason, and to de-

fine the logical ideas that underlie the conceptions of the popular religious consciousness. Again, by promulgating the doctrine of personal freedom, and by connecting itself with national politics, the Reformation was linked historically to the Revolution. It was the Puritan Church in England, stimulated by the patriotism of the Dutch Protestants, which established our constitutional liberty, and introduced in America the general principle of the equality of men. This high political abstraction, latent in Christianity, evolved by criticism, and promulgated as a gospel in the second half of the last century, was externalised in the French Revolution. The work that yet remains to be accomplished for the modern world is the organisation of society in harmony with democratic principles.

Thus what the word Renaissance really means is new birth to liberty—the spirit of mankind recovering consciousness and the power of self-determination, recognising the beauty of the outer world, and of the body through art, liberating the reason in science and the conscience in religion, restoring culture to the intelligence, and establishing the principle of political freedom. The Church was the school-master of the Middle Ages. Culture was the humanising and refining influence of the Renaissance. The problem for the present and the future is how through education to render knowledge accessible to all—to break down that barrier which in the Middle Ages was set between clerk and layman, and which in the intermediate period has arisen between the intelligent and ignorant classes. Whether the Utopia of a modern world, in which all men shall enjoy the same social, political, and intellectual advantages, be realised or not, we cannot doubt that the whole movement of humanity from the Renaissance onward has tended in this direction. To destroy the distinctions, mental and physical, which nature raises between individuals, and which constitute an actual hierarchy, will always be impossible. Yet it may happen that in the future no civilised man will lack the opportunity of being physically and mentally the best that God has made him.

It remains to speak of the instruments and mechanical inventions which aided the emancipation of the spirit in the modern age. Discovered over and over again, and offered at intervals to the human race at various times and on divers soils, no effective use was made of these material resources until the fifteenth century. The compass, discovered according to tradition by Gioja of Naples in 1302, was employed by Columbus for the voyage to America in 1492. The telescope, known to the Arabians in the Middle Ages, and described by Roger Bacon in 1250, helped Copernicus to prove the revolution of the earth in 1530, and Galileo to substantiate his theory of the planetary system. Printing, after numerous useless revelations to the world of its resources, became an art in 1438; and paper, which had long been known to the Chinese, was first made of cotton in Europe about 1000, and of rags in 1319. Gunpowder entered into use about 1320. As employed by the Genius of the Renaissance, each one of these inventions became a lever by means

of which to move the world. Gunpowder revolutionised the art of war. The feudal castle, the armour of the knight and his battle-horse, the prowess of one man against a hundred, and the pride of aristocratic cavalry trampling upon ill-armed militia, were annihilated by the flashes of the cannon. Courage became more a moral than a physical quality. The victory was delivered to the brain of the general. Printing has established, as indestructible, all knowledge, and disseminated, as the common property of everyone, all thought; while paper has made the work of printing cheap. Such reflections as these, however, are trite, and must occur to every mind. It is far more to the purpose to repeat that not the inventions, but the intelligence that used them, the conscious calculating spirit of the modern world, should rivet our attention when we direct it to the phenomena of the Renaissance.

In the work of the Renaissance all the great nations of Europe shared. But it must never be forgotten that as a matter of history the true Renaissance began in Italy. It was there that the essential qualities which distinguish the modern from the ancient and the mediæval world were developed. Italy created that new spiritual atmosphere of culture and of intellectual freedom which has been the life-breath of the European races. As the Jews are called the chosen and peculiar people of divine revelation, so may the Italians be called the chosen and peculiar vessels of the prophecy of the Renaissance. In art, in scholarship, in science, in the mediation between antique culture and the modern intellect, they took the lead, handing to Germany and France and England the restored humanities complete. Spain and England have since done more for the exploration and colonisation of the world. Germany achieved the labour of the Reformation almost single-handed. France has collected, centralised, and diffused intelligence with irresistible energy. But if we return to the first origins of the Renaissance, we find that, at a time when the rest of Europe was inert, Italy had already begun to organise the various elements of the modern spirit, and to set the fashion whereby the other great nations should learn and live.

## CHAPTER II

### ITALIAN HISTORY

*The special Difficulties of this Subject—Apparent Confusion—Want of leading Motive—The Papacy—The Empire—The Republics—The Despots—The People—The Dismemberment of Italy—Two main Topics—The Rise of the Communes—Gothic Kingdom—Lombards—Franks—Germans—The Bishops—The Consuls—The Podestàs—Civil wars—Despots—The Balance of Power—The Five Italian States—The Italians fail to achieve National Unity—The Causes of this Failure—Conditions under which it might have been achieved—A Republic—A Kingdom—A Confederation—A Tyranny—The part played by the Papacy.*

AFTER a first glance into Italian history the student recoils as from a chaos of inscrutable confusion. To fix the moment of transition from ancient to modern civilisation seems impossible. There is no formation of a new people, as in the case of Germany or France or England, to serve as starting-point. Differ as the Italian races do in their original type; Gauls, Ligurians, Etruscans, Umbrians, Latins, Iapygians, Greeks have been fused together beneath the stress of Roman rule into a nation that survives political mutations and the disasters of barbarian invasions. Goths, Lombards, and Franks blend successively with the masses of this complex population, and lose the outlines of their several personalities. The Western Empire melts imperceptibly away. The Roman Church grows no less imperceptibly, and forms the Holy Roman Empire as the equivalent of its own spiritual greatness in the sphere of secular authority. These two institutions, the crowning monuments of Italian creative genius, dominate the Middle Ages, powerful as facts, but still more powerful as ideas. Yet neither of them controls the evolution of Italy in the same sense as France was controlled by the monarchical, and Germany by the federative principle. The forces of the nation, divided and swayed from side to side by this commanding dualism, escaped both influences in so far as either Pope or Emperor strove to mould them into unity. Meanwhile the domination of Byzantine Greeks in the southern provinces, the kingdom of the Goths at Ravenna, the kingdom of the Lombards and Franks at Pavia, the incursions of Huns and Saracens, the kingdom of the Normans at Palermo, formed but accidents and moments in a national development which owed important modifications to each successive episode, but was not finally determined by any of them. When the Communes emerge into prominence, shaking off the supremacy of the Greeks in the South, vindicating their liberties against the Empire in the North, jealously guard-



ing their independence from Papal encroachment in the centre, they have already assumed shapes of marked distinctness and bewildering diversity. Venice, Milan, Genoa, Florence, Bologna, Siena, Perugia, Amalfi, Lucca, Pisa, to mention only a few of the more notable are indiscriminately called Republics. Yet they differ in their internal type no less than in external conditions. Each wears from the first and preserves a physiognomy that justifies our thinking and speaking of the town as an incarnate entity. The cities of Italy down to the very smallest, bear the attributes of individuals. The mutual attractions and repulsions that presided over their growth have given them specific qualities which they will never lose, which will be reflected in their architecture, in their customs, in their language, in their policy, as well as in the institutions of their government. We think of them involuntarily as persons, and reserve for them epithets that mark the permanence of their distinctive characters. To treat of them collectively is almost impossible. Each has its own biography, and plays a part of consequence in the great drama of the nation. Accordingly the study of Italian politics, Italian literature, Italian art, is really not the study of one national genius, but of a whole family of cognate geniuses, grouped together, conscious of affinity, obeying the same general conditions, but issuing in markedly divergent characteristics. Democracies, oligarchies, aristocracies, spring into being by laws of natural selection within the limits of a single province. Every municipality has a separate nomenclature for its magistracies, a somewhat different method of distributing administrative functions. In one place there is a Doge appointed for life; in another the government is put into commission among officers elected for a period of months. Here we find a Patrician, a Senator, a Tribune; there Consuls, Rectors, Priors, Ancients, Buonomini, Conservatori. At one period and in one city the Podestà seems paramount; across the border a Captain of the People or a Gonfaloniere di Giustizia is supreme. Vicars of the Empire, Exarchs, Catapans, Rectors for the Church, Legates, Commissaries, succeed each other with dazzling rapidity. Councils are multiplied and called by names that have their origin and meaning buried in the dust of archæology. Consigli del Popolo, Credenza, Consiglio del Comune, Senato, Gran Consiglio, Pratiche, Parlamenti, Monti, Consiglio de' Savi, Arti, Parte Guelfa Consigli di Dieci, di Tre, I Nove, Gli Otto, I Cento—such are a few of the titles chosen at random from the constitutional records of different localities.

Not one is insignificant. Not one but indicates some moment of importance in the social evolution of the state. Not one but speaks of civil strife whereby the burgh in question struggled into individuality and defined itself against its neighbour. Like fossils in geological strata, these names survive long after their old uses have been forgotten, to guide the explorer in his reconstruction of a buried past. While one town appears to respect the feudal lordship of great families, another pronounces nobility to be a crime, and forces on its citizens the reality



or the pretence of labour. Some recognise the supremacy of ecclesiastics. Others, like Venice, resist the least encroachment of the Church, and stand aloof from Roman Christianity in jealous isolation. The interests of one class are maritime, of another military, of a third industrial, of a fourth financial, or a fifth educational. Amalfi, Pisa, Genoa, and Venice depend for power upon their fleets and colonies; the little cities of Romagna and the March supply the Captains of adventure with recruits; Florence and Lucca live by manufacture; Milan by banking; Bologna, Padua, Vicenza, owe their wealth to students attracted by their universities. Foreign alliances or geographical affinities connect one centre with the Empire of the East, a second with France, a third with Spain. The North is overshadowed by Germany; the South is disquieted by Islam. The types thus formed and thus discriminated are vital, and persist for centuries with the tenacity of physical growths. Each differentiation owes its origin to causes deeply rooted in the locality. The freedom and apparent waywardness of nature, when she sets about to form crystals of varying shapes and colours, that shall last and bear her stamp for ever, have governed their uprising and their progress to maturity. At the same time they exhibit the keen jealousies and mutual hatreds of rival families in the animal kingdom. Pisa destroys Amalfi; Genoa, Pisa; Venice, Genoa; with ruthless and remorseless egotism in the conflict of commercial interests. Florence enslaves Pisa because she needs a way to the sea. Siena and Perugia, upon their inland altitudes, consume themselves in brilliant but un-availing efforts to expand. Milan engulfs the lesser towns of Lombardy. Verona absorbs Padua and Treviso. Venice extends dominion over the Friuli and the Veronese conquests. Strife and covetousness reign from the Alps to the Ionian Sea. But it is a strife of living energies, the covetousness of impassioned and puissant units. Italy as a whole is almost invisible to the student by reason of the many-sided, combative, self-centered crowd of numberless Italian communities. Proximity fomented hatred and stimulates hostility. Fiesole looks down and threatens Florence. Florence returns frown for frown, and does not rest till she has made her neighbour of the hills a slave. Perugia and Assisi turn the Umbrian plain into a wilderness of wolves by their recurrent warfare. Scowling at one another across the Valdichiana, Perugia rears a tower against Chiusi, and Chiusi builds her Becca Questa in responsive menace. The tiniest burgh upon the Arno receives from Dante, the poet of this internecine strife and fierce town-rivalry, its stigma of immortalising satire and insulting epithet, for no apparent reason but that its dwellers dare to drink of the same water and to breathe the same air as Florence. It would seem as though the most ancient furies of antagonistic races, enchained and suspended for centuries by the magic of Rome, had been unloosed; as though the indigenous populations of Italy, tamed by antique culture, were reverting to their primal instincts, with all the discords and divisions introduced by the military system of the Lombards, the feudalism of the Franks, the

alien institutions of the Germans, superadded to exasperate the passions of a nation blindly struggling against obstacles that block the channel of continuous progress. Nor is this the end of the perplexity. Not only are the cities at war with one another, but they are plunged in ceaseless strife within the circuit of their ramparts. The people with the nobles, the burghs with the castles, the plebians with the burgher aristocracy, the men of commerce with the men of arms and ancient lineage, Guelfs and Ghibellines, clash together in persistent fury. One half the city expels the other half. The exiles roam abroad, cement alliances, and return to extirpate their conquerors. Fresh proscriptions and new expulsions follow. Again alliances are made and revolutions accomplished, till the ancient feuds of the towns are crossed, recrossed, and tangled in a web of madness that defies analysis. Through the medley of quarrelling, divided, subdivided, and intertwined factions, ride Emperors followed by their bands of knights, appearing for a season on vain quests, and withdrawing after they have tenfold confounded the confusion. Papal Legates drown the cities of the Church in blood, preach crusades, fulminate interdictions, rouse insurrections in the States that own allegiance to the Empire. Monks stir republican revivals in old cities that have lost their liberties, or assemble the populations of crime-maddened districts in aimless comedies of piety and false pacification, or lead them barefooted and intoxicated with shrill cries of 'Mercy' over plain and mountain. Princes of France, Kings of Bohemia and Hungary, march and countermarch from north to south and back again, form leagues, establish realms, head confederations, which melt like shapes we form from clouds to nothing. At one time the Pope and the Emperor use Italy as the arena of a deadly duel, drawing the congregated forces of the nations into their dispute. At another they join hands to divide the spoil of ruined provinces. Great generals with armies at their backs start into being from apparent nothingness, dispute the sovereignty of Italy in bloodless battles, found ephemeral dynasties, and pass away like mists upon a mountain-side beneath a puff of wind. Conflict, ruin, desolation, anarchy are ever yielding place to concord, restoration, peace, prosperity, and then recurring with a mighty flood of violence. Construction, destruction, and reconstruction play their part in crises that have to be counted by the thousands.

In the meantime, from this hurricane of disorder rises the clear ideal of the national genius. Italy becomes self-conscious and attains the spiritual primacy of modern Europe. Art, Learning, Literature, Statecraft, Philosophy, Science build a sacred and inviolable city of the soul amid the tumult of seven thousand revolutions, the dust and crash of falling cities, the trampings of recurrent invasions, the infamies and outrages of tyrants and marauders who oppress the land. Unshaken by the storms that rage around it, this refuge of the spirit, raised by Italian poets, thinkers, artists, scholars, and discoverers, grows unceasingly in bulk and strength, until the younger nations take their place beneath

its ample dome. Then, while yet the thing of wonder and of beauty stands in fresh perfection, at that supreme moment when Italy is tranquil and sufficient to fulfil the noblest mission for the world, we find her crushed and trampled under foot. Her tempestuous but splendid story closes in the calm of tyranny imposed by Spain.

Over this vertiginous abyss of history, where the memories of antique civilisation blend with the growing impulses of modern life in an uninterrupted sequence of national consciousness; through this many-chambered laboratory of conflicting principles, where the ideals of the Middle Age are shaped, and laws are framed for Europe; across this wonderland of waning and of waxing culture, where Goths, Greeks, Lombards, Franks, and Normans come to form themselves by contact with the ever-living soul of Rome; where Frenchmen, Spaniards, Swiss, and Germans at a later period battle for the richest prize in Europe, and learn by conquest from the conquered to be men; how shall we guide our course? If we follow the fortunes of the Church, and make the Papacy the thread on which the history of Italy shall hang, we gain the advantage of basing our narrative upon the most vital and continuous member of the body politic. But we are soon forced to lose sight of the Italians in the crowd of other Christian races. The history of the Church is cosmopolitan. The sphere of the Papacy extends in all directions around Italy taken as a local centre. Its influence, moreover, was invariably one of discord rather than of harmony within the boundaries of the Peninsula. If we take the Empire as our standing-ground, we have to write the annals of a sustained struggle, in the course of which the Italian cities were successful, when they reduced the Emperor to the condition of an absentee, with merely nominal privileges. After Frederick II. the Empire played no important part in Italy until its rights were reasserted by Charles V. upon the platform of modern politics. A power so external to the true life of the nation, so successfully resisted, so impotent to control the development of the Italians, cannot be chosen as the central point of their history. If we elect the Republics, we are met with another class of difficulties. The historian who makes the Commune his unit, who confines attention to the gradual development, reciprocal animosities, and final decadence of the Republics, can hardly do justice to the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies and the Papacy, which occupy no less than half the country. Again, the great age of the Renaissance, when all the free burghs accepted the rule of despots, and when the genius of the Italians culminated, is for him a period of downfall and degradation. Besides, he leaves the history of the Italian people before the starting-point of the Republics unexplained. He has, at the close of their career, to account for the reason why these Communes, so powerful in self-development, so intelligent, so wealthy, and so capable of playing off the Pope against the Empire, failed to maintain their independence. In other words, he selects one phase of Italian evolution, and writes a narrative that cannot but be partial. If we make the Despots our main point, we repeat

the same error in a worse form. The Despotisms imply the Communes as their predecessors. Each and all of them grew up and flourished on the soil of decadent or tired Republics. Though they are all-important at one period of Italian history—the period of the present work—they do but form an episode in the great epic of the nation. He who attempts a general history of Italy, from the point of view of the Despotisms, is taking a single scene for the whole drama. Finally we might prefer the people—that people, instinctively and persistently faithful to Roman traditions, which absorbed into itself the successive hordes of barbarian invaders, civilised them, and adopted them as men of Italy; that people which destroyed the kingdoms of the Goths and Lombards, humbled the Empire at Legnano, and evolved the Communes; that people which resisted alien feudalism, and spent its prime upon eradicating every trace of the repugnant system from its midst; that people which finally attained to the consciousness of national unity by the recovery of scholarship and culture under the dominion of despotic princes. This people is Italy. But the documents that should throw light upon the early annals of the people are deficient. It does not appear upon the scene before the reign of Otho I. Nor does it become supreme till after the Peace of Constance. Its biography is bound up with that of the republics and the despots. Before the date of their ascendancy we have to deal with Bishops of Rome, Emperors of the East and West, Exarchs and Kings of Italy, the feudal Lords of the Marches, the Dukes and Counts of Lombard and Frankish rulers. Through that long period of incubation, when Italy freed herself from dependence upon Byzantium, created the Papacy and formed the second Roman Empire, the people exists only as a spirit resident in Roman towns and fostered by the Church, which effectually repelled all attempts at monarchical unity, playing the Lombards off against the Goths, the Franks against the Lombards, the Normans against the Greeks, merging the Italian Kingdom in the Empire when it became German, and resisting the Empire of its own creation when the towns at last were strong enough to stand alone. To speak about the people in this early period is, therefore, to invoke a myth; to write its history is the same as writing an ideal history of mediæval Europe.

The truth is that none of these standpoints in isolation suffices for the student of Italy. Her inner history is the history of social and intellectual progress evolving itself under the conditions of attraction and repulsion generated by the double ideas of Papacy and Empire. Political unity is everywhere and at all times imperiously rejected. The most varied constitutional forms are needed for the self-effectuation of a race that has no analogue in Europe. The theocracy of Rome, the monarchy of Naples, the aristocracy of Venice, the democracy of Florence, the tyranny of Milan are equally instrumental in elaborating the national genius that gave art, literature, and mental liberty to modern society. The struggles of city with city for supremacy or bare existence, the internecine wars of party against party, the never-ending

clash of principles within the States, educated the people to multifarious and vivid energy. In the course of those long complicated contests, the chief centres acquired separate personalities, assumed the physiognomy of conscious freedom, and stamped the mark of their own spirit on their citizens. At the end of all discords, at the close of all catastrophes, we find in each of the great towns a population released from mental bondage and fitted to perform the work of intellectual emancipation for the rest of Europe. Thus the essential characteristic of Italy is diversity, controlled and harmonised by an ideal rhythm of progressive movement.<sup>1</sup> We who are mainly occupied in this book with the Italian genius as it expressed itself in society, scholarship, fine art, and literature, at its most brilliant period of renaissance, may accept this fact of political dismemberment with acquiescence. It was to the variety of conditions offered by the Italian communities that we owe the unexampled richness of the mental life of Italy. Yet it is impossible to overlook the weakness inflicted on the people by those same conditions when the time came for Italy to try her strength against the nations of Europe.<sup>2</sup> It was then shown that the diversities which stimulated spiritual energy were a fatal source of national instability. The pride of the Italians in their local independence, their intolerance of unification under a single head, the jealousies that prevented them from forming a permanent confederation, rendered them incapable of coping with races which had yielded to the centripetal force of monarchy. If it is true that the unity of the nation under a kingdom founded at Pavia would have deprived the world of much that Italy has yielded in the sphere of thought and art, it is certainly not less true that such centralisation alone could have averted the ruin of the sixteenth century, which gives the aspect of a tragedy to much of my work on the Renaissance.

Without seeking to attack the whole problem of Italian history, two main topics must be briefly discussed in the present chapter, before entering on the proper matter of this work. The first relates to the growth of the Communes, which precede, necessitated, and determined the despotisms of the fifteenth century. The second raises the question why Italian differs from any other national history, why the people failed to achieve unity either under a sovereign or in a powerful confederation. These two subjects of inquiry are closely connected and interdependent. They bring into play the several points that have been indicated as partially and imperfectly explanatory of the problem of

<sup>1</sup> See Guicciardini (*Op. Ined.* vol. i. p. 28) for an eloquent demonstration of the happiness, prosperity, and splendour conferred on the Italians by the independence of their several centres. He is arguing against Machiavelli's lamentation over their failure to achieve national unity.

<sup>2</sup> This was the point urged by Machiavelli, in the *Principe*, the *Discorsi*, and the *Art of War*. With keener political insight than Guicciardini, he perceived that the old felicity of Italy was about to fail her through the very independence of her local centres, which Guicciardini rightly recognised as the source of her unparalleled civilisation and wealth. The one thing needful in the shock with France and Spain was unity.

Italy. But, since I have undertaken to write neither a constitutional nor a political history, but a history of culture at a certain epoch, it will be enough to treat of these two questions briefly, with the special view of showing under what conditions the civilisation of the Renaissance came to maturity in numerous independent Communes, reduced at last by necessary laws of circumstance to tyranny; and how it was checked at the point of transition to its second phase of modern existence, by political weakness inseparable from the want of national coherence in the shock with mightier military races.

Modern Italian history may be said to begin with the retirement of Honorius to Ravenna and the subsequent foundation of Odoacer's Kingdom in 476. The Western Empire ended, and Rome was recognised as a Republic. When Zeno sent the Goths into Italy, Theodoric established himself at Ravenna, continued the institutions and usages of the ancient Empire, and sought by blending with the people to naturalise his alien authority. Rome was respected as the sacred city of ancient culture and civility. Her Consuls, appointed by the Senate, were confirmed in due course by the Greek Emperor; and Theodoric made himself the vicegerent of the Cæsars rather than an independent sovereign. When we criticise the Ostro-Gothic occupation by the light of subsequent history, it is clear that this exclusion of the capital from Theodoric's conquest and his veneration for the Eternal City were fatal to the unity of the Italian realm. From the moment that Rome was separated from the authority of the Italian Kings, there existed two powers in the peninsula—the one secular, monarchical, with the military strength of the barbarians imposed upon its ancient municipal organisation; the other ecclesiastical, pontifical, relying on the undefined ambitions of S. Peter's See and the unconquered instincts of the Roman people scattered through the still surviving cities.<sup>3</sup> Justinian, bent upon asserting his rights as the successor of the Cæsars, wrested Italy from the hands of the Goths; but scarcely was this revolution effected when Narses, the successor Belisarius, called a new nation of barbarians to support his policy in Italy. Narses died before the advent of the Lombards; but they descended, in forces far more formidable than the Goths, and established a second kingdom at Pavia. Under the Lombard domination Rome was left untouched. Venice, with her population gathered from the ruins of the neighbouring Roman cities, remained in quasi-subjection to the Empire of the East. Ravenna became a Greek garrison, ruling the Exarchate and Pentapolis under the name of the Byzantine Emperors. The western coast escaped the Lombard domination; for Genoa grew slowly into power upon her narrow cornice between hills and sea, while Pisa defied the barbarians intrenched

<sup>3</sup> When I apply the term Roman here and elsewhere to the inhabitants of the Italian towns, I wish to indicate the indigenous Italic populations moulded by Roman rule into homogeneity. The resurgence of this population and its reattainment of intellectual consciousness by the recovery of past traditions and the rejection of foreign influence constitutes the history of Italy upon the close of the Dark Ages.

in military stations at Fiesole and Lucca. In like manner the islands, Sicily, Sardinia, and Corsica, were detached from the Lombard Kingdom; and the maritime cities of Southern Italy, Bari, Naples, Amalfi, and Gaeta, asserted independence under the shadow of the Greek ascendancy. What the Lombards achieved in their conquest, and what they failed to accomplish, decided the future of Italy. They broke the country up into unequal blocks: for while the inland regions of the north obeyed Pavia, while the great duchies of Spoleto in the centre and of Benevento in the south owned the nominal sway of Alboin's successors,<sup>4</sup> Venice and the Riviera, Pisa and the maritime republics of Apulia and Calabria, Ravenna and the islands, repelled their sovereignty. Rome remained inviolable beneath the ægis of her ancient prestige, and the decadent Empire of the East was too inert to check the freedom of the towns which recognised its titular supremacy.

The kingdom of the Lombards endured two centuries, and left ineffaceable marks upon Italy. A cordon of military cities was drawn round the old Roman centres in Lombardy, Tuscany, and the Duchy of Spoleto. Pavia rose against Milan, which had been a second Rome, Cividale against Aquileia, Fiesole against Florence, Lucca against Pisa. The country was divided into Duchies and Marches; military service was exacted from the population, and the laws of the Lombards, *asininum jus, quoddam jus quod faciebant reges per se*, as the jurists afterwards defined them, were imposed upon the descendants of Roman civilisation. Yet the outlying cities of the sea-coasts, as we have already seen, were independent; and Rome remained to be the center of revolutionary ideas, the rallying-point of a policy inimical to Lombard unity. Not long after their settlement, the princes of the Lombard race took the fatal step of joining the Catholic communion, whereby they strengthened the hands of Rome and excluded themselves from tyrannising in the last resort over the growing independence of the Papal See. The causes of their conversion from Arianism to orthodox Latin Christianity are buried in obscurity. But it is probable that they were driven to this measure by the rebelliousness of their great vassals and the necessity of resting for support upon the indigenous populations they had subjugated. Rome, profiting by the errors and the weakness of her antagonists, extended her spiritual dominion by enforcing sacraments, ordeals, and appeals to ecclesiastical tribunals, organised her hierarchy under Gregory the Great, and lost no opportunity of enriching and aggrandising her bishoprics. In 718 she shook off the yoke of Byzantium by repelling the heresies of Leo the Isaurian; and when this insurrection menaced her with domestic tyranny of the Lombard Kings, who possessed themselves of Ravenna in 728, she called the Franks to her aid against the now powerful realm. Stephen II. journeyed in 753 to Gaul, named Pippin Patrician of Rome, and invited him to the conquest of Italy. In

<sup>4</sup> It will be remembered by students of early Italian history that Benevento and Spoleto joined the Church in her war upon the Lombard kingdom. Spoleto was broken up. Benevento survived as a Lombard duchy till the Norman Conquest.



the war that followed, the Franks subdued the Lombards, and Charles the Great was invested with their kingdom and crowned Emperor in 800 by Leo III. at Rome.

The famous compact between Charles the Great and the Pope was in effect a ratification of the existing state of things. The new Emperor took for himself and converted into a Frankish Kingdom all the provinces that had been wrested from the Lombards. He relinquished to the Papacy Rome with its patrimony, the portions of Spoleto and Benevento that had already yielded to the See of S. Peter, the southern provinces that owned the nominal ascendancy of Byzantium, the islands and the cities of the Exarchate and Pentapolis which formed no part of the Lombard conquest. By this stipulation no real temporal power was accorded to the Papacy, nor did the new Empire surrender its paramount rights over the peninsula at large. The Italian Kingdom, transferred to the Franks in 800, was the kingdom founded by the Lombards; while the outlying and unconquered districts were placed beneath the protectorate of the power which had guided their emancipation. Thus the dualism introduced into Italy by Theodoric's veneration for Rome, and confirmed by the failure of the Lombard conquest, was ratified in the settlement whereby the Pope gave a new Empire to Western Christendom. Venice, Pisa, Genoa, and the maritime Republics of the south, excluded from the kingdom, were left to pursue their own course of independence; and this is the chief among many reasons why they rose so early into prominence. Rome consolidated her ancient patrimonies and extended her rectorship in the centre, while the Frankish kings, who succeeded each other through eight reigns, developed the Regno upon feudal principles by parcelling the land among their Counts. New marches were formed, traversing the previous Lombard fabric and introducing divisions that decentralised the kingdom. Thus the great vassals of Ivrea, Verona, Tuscany, and Spoleto raised themselves against Pavia. The monarchs, placed between the Papacy and their ambitious nobles, were unable to consolidate the realm; and when Berengar, the last independent sovereign, strove to enforce the declining authority of Pavia, he was met with the resistance and the hatred of the nation.

The kingdom Berengar attempted to maintain against his vassals and the Church was virtually abrogated by Otho I., whom the Lombard nobles summoned into Italy in 951. When he reappeared in 961, he was crowned Emperor at Rome, and assumed the title of the King of Italy. Thus the Regno was merged in the Empire, and Pavia ceased to be a capital. Henceforth the two great potentates in the peninsula were an unarmed Pontiff and an absent Emperor. The subsequent history of the Italians shows how they succeeded in reducing both these powers to the condition of principles, maintaining the pontifical and imperial ideas, but repelling the practical authority of either potentate. Otho created new marches and gave them to men of German origin. The houses of Savoy and Montferrat rose into importance in his reign.



To Verona were entrusted the passes between Germany and Italy. The Princes of Este at Ferrara held the keys of Po, while the family of Canossa accumulated fiefs that stretched from Mantua across the plain of Lombardy, over the Apennines to Lucca, and southward to Spoleto. Thus the ancient Italy of Lombards and Franks was superseded by a new Italy of German feudalism, owing allegiance to a suzerain whose interests detained him in the provinces beyond the Alps. At the same time the organisation of the Church was fortified. The Bishops were placed on an equality with the Counts in the chief cities, and Viscounts were created to represent their civil jurisdiction. It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of Otho's concessions to the Bishops. During the preceding period of Frankish rule about one third of the soil of Italy had been yielded to the Church, which had the right of freeing its vassals from military service; and since the ecclesiastical sees were founded upon ancient sites of Roman civilisation, without regard to the military centres of the barbarian kingdoms, the new privileges of the Bishops accrued to the benefit of the indigenous population. Milan, for example, down-trodden by Pavia, still remained the major See of Lombardy. Aquileia, though a desert, had her patriarch, while Cividale, established as a fortress to coerce the neighboring Roman towns, was ecclesiastically but a village. At this epoch a third power emerged in Italy. Berengar had given the cities permission to inclose themselves with walls in order to repel the invasions of the Huns.<sup>5</sup> Otho respected their right of self-defence, and from the date of his coronation the history of the free burghs begins in Italy. It is at first closely connected with the changes wrought by the extinction of the kingdom of Pavia, by the exaltation of the clergy, and by the dislocation of the previous system of feud-holding, which followed upon Otho's determination to remodel the country in the interest of the German Empire. The Regno was abolished. The ancient landmarks of nobility were altered and confused. The cities under their Bishops assumed a novel character of independence. Those of Roman origin, being ecclesiastical centres, had a distinct advantage over the more recent foundations of the Lombard and the Frankish monarchs. The Italic population everywhere emerged and displayed a vitality that had been crushed and overlaid by centuries of invasion and military oppression.

The burghs at this epoch may be regarded as luminous points in the dense darkness of feudal aristocracy.<sup>6</sup> Gathering round their Cathed-

<sup>5</sup> It is worthy of notice that to this date belongs the war-chant of the Modenese sentinels, with its allusions to Troy and Hector, which is recognised as the earliest specimen of the Italian hendecasyllabic metre.

<sup>6</sup> It is not necessary to raise antiquarian questions here relating to the origin of the Italian Commune. Whether regarded as a survival of the ancient Roman *municipium* or as an offshoot from the Lombard *guild*, it was a new birth of modern times, a new organism evolved to express the functions of Italian as different from ancient Roman or mediæval Lombard life. The affection of the people for their past induced them to use the nomenclature of Latin civility for the officers and councils of the Commune. Thus a specious air of classical antiquity, rather literary and sentimental than real,

dral as a centre, the towns inclose their dwellings with bastions, from which they gaze upon a country bristling with castles, occupied by serfs, and lorded over by the hierarchical nobility. Within the city the Bishop and the Count hold equal sway; but the Bishop has upon his side the sympathies and passions of the burghers. The first effort of the towns is to expel the Count from their midst. Some accident of misrule infuriates the citizens. They fly to arms and are supported by the Bishop. The Count has to retire to the open country, where he strengthens himself in his castle.<sup>7</sup> Then the Bishop remains victor in the town, and forms a government of rich and noble burghers, who control with him the fortunes of the new-born state. At this crisis we begin to hear for the first time a word that has been much misunderstood. The *Popolo* appears upon the scene. Interpreting the past by the present, and importing the connotation gained by the word *people* in the revolutions of the last two centuries, students are apt to assume that the *Popolo* of the Italian burghs included the whole population. In reality it was at first a close aristocracy of influential families, to whom the authority of the superseded Counts was transferred in commission, and who held it by hereditary right.<sup>8</sup> Unless we firmly grasp this fact, the subsequent vicissitudes of the Italian commonwealths are unintelligible, and the elaborate definitions of the Florentine doctrinaires lose half their meaning. The internal revolutions of the free cities were almost invariably caused by the necessity of enlarging the *Popolo*, and extending its franchise to the non-privileged inhabitants. Each effort after expansion provoked an obstinate resistance from those families who held the rights of burghership; and thus the technical terms *primo popolo*, *secondo popolo*, *popolo grasso*, *popolo minuto*, frequently occurring in the records of the Republics, indicate several stages in the progress from oligarchy to democracy. The constitution of the city at this early period was simple. At the head of its administration stood the Bishop, with the *Popolo* of enfranchised burghers. The *Commune* included the

was given to the *Commune* at the outset. Moreover, it must be remembered that Rome itself had suffered no substantial interruption of republican existence during the dark ages. Therefore the free burghs, though their vitality was the outcome of wholly new conditions, though they were built up of guilds and associations representing interests of modern origin, flattered themselves with an uninterrupted municipal succession from the Roman era, and pointed for proof to the Eternal City.

<sup>7</sup> The Italian word *contado* is a survival from this state of things. It represents a moment in the national development when the sphere of the Count outside the city was defined against the sphere of the municipality. The *Contadini* are the people of the *Contado*, the Count's men.

<sup>8</sup> Even Petrarch, in his letter to four Cardinals (Lett. Fam. xi. 16, ed. Fracassetti) on the reformation of the Roman Commonwealth, recommends the exclusion of the neighbouring burghs and all strangers, inclusive of the Colonna and Orsini families, from the franchise. None but pure Romans, how to be discovered from the *Colluvies omnium gentium* deposited upon the Seven Hills by centuries of immigration he does not clearly say, should be chosen to revive the fallen majesty of the Republic. See in particular the peroration of his argument (op. cit. vol. iii. p. 95). In other words, he aims at a narrow *Popolo*, a *pura cittadinanza*, in the sense of Cacciaguیدا, Par. xvi.

Popolo, together with the non-qualified inhabitants, and was represented by Consuls varying in number according to the division of the town into quarters.<sup>9</sup> Thus the Commune and the Popolo were originally separate bodies; and this distinction has been perpetuated in the architecture of those towns which still can show a Palazzo del Popolo apart from the Palazzo del Commune. Since the affairs of the city had to be conducted by discussion, we find Councils corresponding to the constituent elements of the burgh. There is the *Parlamento*, in which the inhabitants meet together to hear the decisions of the Bishop and the Popolo, or to take measures in extreme cases that affect the city as a whole; the *Gran Consiglio*, which is only open to duly qualified members of the Popolo; and the *Credenza*, or privy council of specially delegated burghers, who debate on matters demanding secrecy and diplomacy. Such, generally speaking, and without regard to local differences, was the internal constitution of an Italian city during the supremacy of the Bishops.

In the North of Italy not a few of the greater vassals, among whom may be mentioned the houses of Canossa, Montferrat, Savoy, and Este, creations of the Salic Emperors, looked with favour upon the development of the towns, while some nobles went so far as to constitute themselves feudatories of Bishops.<sup>10</sup> The angry warfare carried on against Canossa by the Lombard barons has probably to be interpreted by the jealousy this popular policy excited. At the same time, while Lombardy and Tuscany were establishing their municipal liberties, a sympathetic movement began in Southern Italy, which resulted in the conquest of Apulia, Calabria, and Sicily by the Normans. Omitting all the details of this episode, than which nothing more dramatic is presented by the history of modern nations, it must be enough to point out here that the Normans finally severed Italy from the Greek Empire, gave a monarchical stamp to the south of the peninsula, and brought the Regno they consolidated into the sphere of national politics under the protection of the Pope. Up to the date of their conquest Southern Italy had a separate and confused history. It now entered the Italian community, and by the peculiar circumstances of its cession to the Holy See was destined in the future to become the chief instrument whereby the Popes disturbed the equilibrium of the peninsula in furtherance of their ambitious schemes.

The greatness of the Roman cities under the popular rule of their Bishops is illustrated by Milan, second only to Rome in the last days of the Empire. Milan had been reduced to the condition of abject misery by the Kings, who spared no pains to exalt Pavia at the expense of her elder sister. After the dissolution of the kingdom, she started into new life, and in 1037 her archbishop, Heribert, was singled out by

<sup>9</sup> In some places we find as many as twelve Consuls. It appears that both the constituent families of the Popolo and the numbers of the Consuls were determined by the Sections of the city, so many being told off for each quarter.

<sup>10</sup> The Pelavicini of S. Donnino, for example, gave themselves to Parma.

Conrad II. as the protagonist of the episcopal revolution against feudalism.<sup>11</sup> Heribert was in truth the hero of the burghs in their first strife for independence. It was he who devised the *Carroccio*, an immense car drawn by oxen, bearing the banner of the Commune, with an altar and priests ministrant, around which the pikemen of the city mustered when they went to war. This invention of Heribert's was soon adopted by the cities throughout Italy. It gave cohesion and confidence to the citizens, reminded them that the Church was on their side in the struggle for freedom, and served as symbol of their military strength in union. The first authentic records of a Parliament, embracing the nobles of the Popolo, the clergy, and the multitude, are transmitted to us by the Milanese Chronicle, in which Heribert figures as the president of a republic. From this date Milan takes the lead in the contests for municipal independence. Her institutions, like that of the *Carroccio*, together with her tameless spirit, are communicated to the neighboring cities of Lombardy, cross the Apennines, and animate the ancient burghs of Tuscany.

Having founded their liberties upon the episcopal presidency, the cities now proceeded to claim the right of choosing their own Bishops. They refused the prelates sent them by the Emperor, and demanded an election by the Chapters of each town. This privilege was virtually won when the war of Investitures broke out in 1073. After the death of Gregory VI. in 1046, the Emperors resolved to enforce their right of nominating the Popes. The first two prelates imposed on Rome, Clement II. and Damasus II., died under suspicion of poison. Thus the Roman people refused a foreign Pope, as the Lombards had rejected the Bishops sent to rule them. The next Popes, Leo IX. and Victor II., were persuaded by Hildebrand, who now appears upon the stage, to undergo a second election at Rome by the clergy and the people. They escaped assassination. But the fifth German, Stephen X., again died suddenly; and now the formidable monk of Soana felt himself powerful enough to cause the election of his own candidate, Nicholas II. A Lateran council, inspired by Hildebrand, transferred the election of Popes to the Cardinals, approved by the clergy and people of Rome, and confirmed the privilege of the cities to choose their Bishops, subject to Papal ratification. In 1073 Hildebrand assumed the tiara as Gregory VII., and declared a war that lasted more than forty years against the Empire. At its close in 1122 the Church and the Empire were counterposed as mutually exclusive autocracies, the one claiming illimitable spiritual sway, the other recognised as no less illimitably paramount in civil society. From the principles raised by Hildebrand and contested in the struggles of this duel, we may date those new conceptions of the two chief powers of Christendom which found final expression in the theocratic philosophy of the *Summa* and

<sup>11</sup> He was summoned before the Diet of Pavia for having dispossessed a noble of his feud.

the imperial absolutism of the *De Monarchiâ*. Meanwhile the Empire and the Papacy, while trying their force against each other, had proved to Italy their essential weakness. What they gained as ideas, controlling the speculations of the next two centuries, they lost as potentates in the peninsula. It was impossible for either Pope or Emperor to carry on the war without bidding for the support of the cities; and therefore, at the end of the struggle, the free burghs found themselves strengthened at the expense of both powers. Still it must not be forgotten that the wars of Investitures, while they developed the independent spirit and the military energies of the Republics, penetrated Italy with the vice of party conflict. The ineradicable divisions of Guelph and Ghibelline were a heavy price to pay for a step forward on the path of emancipation; nor was the ecclesiastical revolution, which tended to Italianise the Papacy, while it magnified its cosmopolitan ascendancy, other than a source of evil to the nation.

The forces liberated in the cities by these wars brought the Consuls to the front. The Bishops had undermined the feudal fabric of the kingdom, depressed the Counts, and restored the Roman towns to prosperity. During the war both Popolo and Commune grew in vigour, and their Consuls began to use the authority that had been conquered by the prelates. At first the Consuls occupied a subordinate position as men of affairs and notaries, needed to transact the business of the mercantile inhabitants. They now took the lead as political agents of the first magnitude, representing the city in its public acts, and superseding the ecclesiastics. The Popolo was enlarged by the admission of new burgher families, and the ruling caste, though still oligarchical, became more fairly representative of the inhabitants. This progress was inevitable, when we remember that the cities had been organised for warfare, and that, except their Consuls, they had no officials who combined civil and military functions. Under the jurisdiction of the Consuls Roman law was everywhere substituted for Lombard statutes, and another strong blow was thus dealt against decaying feudalism. The school of Bologna eclipsed the University of Pavia. Justinian's Code was studied with passionate energy, and the Italic people enthusiastically reverted to the institutions of their past. In the fable of the Codex of the *Pandects* brought by Pisa from Amalfi we can trace the fervour of this movement, whereby the Romans of the cities struggled after resurrection.

One of the earliest manifestations of municipal vitality was the war of city against city, which began to blaze with fury in the first half of the twelfth century, and endured so long as free towns lasted to perpetuate the conflict. No sooner had the burghs established themselves beneath the presidency of their Consuls than they turned the arms they had acquired in the war of independence against their neighbours. The phenomenon was not confined to any single district. It revealed a new necessity in the very constitution of the commonwealths. Penned up within the narrow limits of their petty dependencies, throbbing with

fresh life, overflowing with a populace inured to warfare, demanding channels for their energies in commerce, competing with each other on the paths of industry, they clashed in deadliest duels for breathing space and means of wealth. The occasions that provoked one Commune to declare war upon its rival were trivial. The animosity was internecine and persistent. Life or death hung in the balance. It was a conflict for ascendancy that brought the sternest passions into play, and decided the survival of the fittest among hundreds of competing cities. The deeply rooted jealousies of Roman and feudal centres, the recent partisanship of Papal and Imperial principles, embittered this strife. But what lay beneath all superficial causes of dissension was the economic struggle of communities, for whom the soil of Italy already had begun to seem too narrow. So superabundant were the forces of her population, so vast were the energies emancipated by her attainment of municipal freedom, that this mighty mother of peoples could not afford equal sustenance to all her children. New-born, they had to strangle one another as they hung upon the breasts that gave them nourishment. It was impossible for the Emperor to overlook the apparent anarchy of his fairest province. Therefore, when Frederick Barbarossa was elected in 1152, his first thought was to reduce the Garden of the Empire to order. Soon after his election he descended into Lombardy and formed two leagues among the cities of the North, the one headed by Pavia, the centre of the abrogated kingdom, the other by Milan, who inherited the majesty of Rome and contained within her loins the future of Italian freedom. It is not necessary to follow in detail the conflict of the Lombard burghs with Frederick, so enthusiastically described by their historian, Sismondi. It is enough for our present purpose to remember that in the course of that contention both leagues made common cause against the Emperor, drew the Pope Alexander III. into their quarrel, and at last in 1183, after the victory of Legnano had convinced Frederick of his weakness, extorted by the Peace of Constance privileges whereby their autonomy was amply guaranteed and recognised. The advantages won by Milan, who sustained the brunt of the Imperial onslaughts, and by the splendour of her martyrdom surmounted the petty jealousies of her municipal rivals, were extended to the cities of Tuscany. After the date of that compact signed by the Emperor and his insurgent subjects, the burghs obtained an assured position as a third power between the Empire and the Church. The most remarkable point in the history of this contention is the unanimous submission of the Communes to what they regarded as the just suzerainty of Cæsar's representative. Though they were omnipotent in Lombardy, they took no measures for closing the gates of the Alps against the Germans. The Emperor was free to come and go as he listed; and when peace was signed, he reckoned the burghers who had beaten him by arms and policy among his loyal vassals. Still, the spirit of independence in Italy has been amply asserted. This is notably displayed

in the address presented to Frederick, before his coronation, by the Senate of Rome. Regenerated by Arnold of Brescia's revolutionary mission, the Roman people assumed its antique majesty in these remarkable words: 'Thou wast a stranger; I have made thee citizen: thou camest from regions beyond the Alps; I have conferred on thee the principality.'<sup>12</sup> Presumptuous boast as this sounded in the ears of Frederick, it proved that the Italic nation had now sharply defined itself against the Church and the barbarians. It still accepted the Empire, because the Empire was the glory of Italy, the crown that gave to her people the presidency of civilization. It still recognised the authority of the Church, because the Church was the eldest daughter of Italy emergent from the wrecks of Roman society. But the nation had become conscious of its right to stand apart from either.

Strengthened by their contest with Frederick Barbarossa, recognised in their rights as belligerent powers, and left to their own guidance by the Empire, the cities were now free to prosecute their wars upon the remnants of feudalism. The town, as we have learned to know it, was surrounded by a serried rank of castles, where the nobles held still undisputed authority over serfs of the soil. Against this cordon of fortresses every city with singular unanimity directed the forces it had formed in the preceding conflicts. At the same time the municipal struggles of Commune against Commune lost none of their virulence. The Counts, pressed on all sides by the towns that had grown up around them, adopted the policy of pitting one burgh against another. When a noble was attacked by the township near his castle, he espoused the animosities of a more distant city, compromised his independence by accepting the captaincy or lieutenantancy of communes hostile to his natural enemies, and thus became the servant or ally of a Republic. In his desperation he emancipated his serfs, and so the folk of the Contado profited by the dissensions of the cities and their feudal masters. This new phase of republican evolution lasted over a long and ill-defined

<sup>12</sup> 'Hospes eras, civem feci. Advena fuisti ex transalpinis partibus, principem constitui. Quod meum jure fuit, tibi dedi.' See *Ottonis Episcopi Frisingensis Chronicon*, De Rebus Gestis Frid. i. Imp. Lib. ii. cap. 21. Basileæ, 1569. The Legates appointed by the Senate met the Emperor at Sutri, and delivered the oration of which the sentence just quoted was part. It began: 'Urbis legati nos, rex optimo, ad tuam a Senatu, populoque Romano destinati sumus excellentiam,' and contained this remarkable passage: 'Orbis imperium affectas, coronam praebitura gratanter assurgo, joculariter occurro. . . . indebitum clericorum excusserus jugum.' If the words are faithfully reported, the Republic separates itself abruptly from the Papacy, and claims a kind of precedence in honour before the Empire. Frederick is said to have interrupted the Legates in a rage before they could finish their address, and to have replied with angry contempt. The speech put into his mouth is probably a rhetorical composition, but it may have expressed his sentiments. 'Multa de Romanorum sapientia seu fortitudine hactenus audivimus, magis tanem de sapientia. Quare satis mirari non possumus, quod verba vestra plus arrogantiae tumore insipida quam sale sapientiae condita sentimus. . . . Fuit, fuit quondam in hac Republica virtus. Quondam dico, atque o utinam tam veraciter quam libenter nunc dicere possemus,' etc.



period, assuming different characters in different centres; but the end of it was that the nobles were forced to submit to the cities. They were admitted to the burghership, and agreed to spend a certain portion of every year in the palaces they raised within the circuit of the walls. Thus the Counts placed themselves beneath the jurisdiction of the Consuls, and the Italic population absorbed into itself the relics of Lombard, Frank, and German aristocracy. Still the gain upon the side of the republics was not clear. Though the feudal lordship of the nobles had been destroyed, their wealth, their lands, and their prestige remained untouched. In the city they felt themselves but aliens. Their real home was still the castle on the neighbouring mountain. Nor, when they stooped to become burghers, had they relinquished the use of arms. Instead of building peaceable dwelling-houses in the city, they filled its quarters with fortresses and towers, whence they carried on feuds among themselves and imperilled the safety of the streets. It was speedily discovered that the war against the Castles had become a war against the Palaces, and that the arena had been transferred from the open Contado to the Piazza and the barricade. The authority of the Consuls proved insufficient to maintain an equilibrium between the people and the nobles. Accordingly a new magistrate started into being, combining the offices of supreme justiciary and military dictator. When Frederick Barbarossa attempted to govern the rebellious Lombard cities in the common interest of the Empire, he established in their midst a foreign judge, called Podestà, *quasi habens potestatem Imperatoris in hac parte*. This institution only served at the moment to inflame and embitter the resistance of the Communes; but the title of Podestà was subsequently conferred upon the official summoned to maintain an equal balance between the burghers and the nobles. He was invariably a foreigner, elected for one year, entrusted with summary jurisdiction in all matters of dispute, exercising the power of life and death, and disposing of the municipal militia. The old constitution of the Commune remained to control this dictator and to guard the independence of the city. All the Councils continued to act, and the Consuls were fortified by the formation of a College of Ancients or Priors. The Podestà was created with the express purpose of effecting a synthesis between two rival sections of the burgh. He was never regarded as other than an alien to the city, adopted as a temporary mediator and controller of incompatible elements. The lordship of the burgh still resided with the Consuls, who from this time forward began to lose their individuality in the College of the *Signoria*—called *Priori*, *Anziani*, or *Rettori*, as the case might be in various districts.

The Italian republics had reached this stage when Frederick II. united the Empire and the kingdom of the Two Sicilies. It was a crisis of the utmost moment for Italian independence. Master of the South, Frederick sought to reconquer the lost prerogatives of the Empire in Lombardy and Tuscany; nor is it improbable that he might have suc-



ceeded in uniting Italy beneath his sway but for the violent animosity of the Church. The warfare of extermination carried on by the Popes against the house of Hohenstauffen was no proof of their partiality for the cause of freedom. They dreaded the reality of a kingdom that should base itself on Italy and be the rival of their own authority. Therefore they espoused the cause of the free burghs against Frederick, and when the North was devastated by his Vicars, they preached a crusade against Ezzelino da Romano. In the convulsions that shook Italy from North to South the parties of Guelf and Ghibelline took shape, and acquired an ineradicable force. All the previous humours and discords of the nation were absorbed by them. The Guelf party meant the burghers of the consular Communes, the men of industry and commerce, the upholders of civil liberty, the friends of democratic expansion. The Ghibelline party included the naturalised nobles, the men of arms and idleness, the advocates of feudalism, the politicians who regarded constitutional progress with disfavour. That the banner of the Church floated over the one camp, while the standard of the Empire rallied to itself the hostile party, was a matter of comparatively superficial moment. The true strength of the war lay in the population, divided by irreconcilable ideals, each eager to possess the city for itself, each prepared to die for its adopted principles. The struggle is a social struggle, played out within the precincts of the Commune, for the supremacy of one or the other moiety of the whole people. A city does not pronounce itself either Guelf or Ghibelline till half the burghers have been exiled. The victorious party organises the government in its own interest, establishes itself in a Palazzo apart from the Commune, where it develops its machinery at home and abroad, and strengthens its finance by forced contributions and confiscations.<sup>13</sup> The exiles make common cause with members of their own faction in an adverse burgh; and thus, by the diplomacy of Guelfs and Ghibellines, the most distant centres are drawn into the network of a common dualism. In this way we are justified in saying that Italy achieved her national consciousness through strife and conflict; for the Communes ceased to be isolated, cemented by temporary leagues, or engaged in merely local conflicts. They were brought together and connected by the sympathies and antipathies of an antagonism which embraced and dominated the municipalities, set Republics and Regno on equal footing, and merged the titular leaders of the struggle, Pope and Emperor, in the uncontrollable tumult. The issue was no vulgar one; no merely egotistic interests were at stake. Guelfs and Ghibellines alike interrogated the oracle, with perfect will to obey its inspiration for the common good. But they read the utterances of the Pythia in adverse senses. The Ghibelline heard Italy calling upon him to build a citadel that should

<sup>13</sup> It is enough to refer to the importance of the *Parte Guelfa* in the history of Florence.

be guarded by the lance and shield of chivalry, where the hierarchies of feudalism, ranged beneath the daïs of the Empire, might dispense culture and civil order in due measure to the people. The Guelf believed that she was bidding him to multiply arts and guilds within the burgh, beneath the mantle of the Pope, who stood for Christ, the preacher of equality and peace for all mankind, in order that the beehive of industry should in course of time evolve a civil order and a culture representative of its own freely acting forces.

During the stress and storm of the fierce warfare carried on by Guelfs and Ghibellines, the Podestà fell into the second rank. He had been created to meet an emergency; but now the discord was too vehement for arbitration. A new functionary appears, with the title of *Captain of the People*. Chosen when one or other of the factions gains supreme power in the burgh, he represents the victorious party, takes the lead in proscribing their opponents, and ratifies on his responsibility the changes introduced into the constitution. The old magistracies and councils, meanwhile, are not abrogated. The Consiglio del Popolo, with the Capitano at his head, takes the lead; and a new member, called the Consiglio della Parte, is found beside them, watchful to maintain the policy of the victorious faction. But the Consiglio del Commune, with the Podestà, who has not ceased to exercise judicial functions, still subsists. The Priors form the Signory as of old. The Credenza goes on working, and the Gran Consiglio represents the body of privileged burghers. The party does but tyrannise over the city it has conquered, and manipulates the ancient constitution for its own advantage. In this clash of Guelf with Ghibelline the beneficiaries were the lower classes of the people. Excluded from the Popolo of episcopal and consular revolutions, the trades and industries of the great cities now assert their claims to be enfranchised. The advent of the *Arti* is the chief social phenomenon of the crisis.<sup>14</sup> Thus the final issue of the conflict was a new Italy, deeply divided by factions that were little understood, because they were so vital, because they represented two adverse currents of national energy, incompatible, irreconcilable, eternal in antagonism as the poles. But this discordant nation was more commercial and more democratic. Families of merchants rose upon the ruins of the old nobility. Roman cities of industry reduced their military rivals of earlier or later origin to insignificance. The plain, the river, and the port asserted themselves against the mountain fastness and the barrack-burgh. The several classes of society, triturated, shaken together, levelled by warfare and equalised by industry, presented but few obstacles to the emergence of commanding personalities, however humble, from their ranks. Not only had the hierarchy of feudalism disappeared; but the constitution of the city itself was confused, and the Popolo, whether

<sup>14</sup> The history of Florence illustrates more clearly than that of any other town the vast importance acquired by trades and guilds in politics at this epoch of the civil wars.

'primo' or 'secondo' or even 'terzo,' was diluted with recently enfranchised Contadini and all kinds of 'novi homines.'<sup>15</sup> The Divine Comedy, written after the culmination of the Guelf and Ghibelline dissensions, yields the measure of their animosity. Dante finds no place in Hell, Heaven, or Purgatory for the souls who stood aloof from strife, the angels who were neither Guelf nor Ghibelline in Paradise. His Vigiacci, 'wretches who never lived,' because they never felt the pangs or ecstasies of partisanship, wander homeless on the skirts of Limbo, among the abortions and offscourings of creation. Even so there was no standing-ground in Italy outside one or the other hostile camp. Society was riven down to its foundation. Rancours dating from the thirteenth century endured long after the great parties ceased to have a meaning. They were perpetuated in customs, and expressed themselves in the most trivial details. Banners, ensigns, and heraldic colours followed the divisions of the factions. Ghibellines wore the feathers in their caps upon one side, Guelfs upon the other. Ghibellines cut fruit at table crosswise, Guelfs straight down. In Bergamo some Calabrians were murdered by their host, who discovered from their way of slicing garlic that they sided with the hostile party. Ghibellines drank out of smooth, and Guelfs out of chased goblets. Ghibellines wore white, and Guelfs red, roses. Yawning, passing in the street, throwing dice, gestures in speaking or swearing, were used as pretexts for distinguishing the one half of Italy from the other. So late as the middle of the fifteenth century, the Ghibellines of Milan tore Christ from the high-altar of the Cathedral at Crema and burned him because he turned his face to the Guelf shoulder. Every great city has a tale of love and death that carries the contention of its adverse families into the region of romance and legend. Florence dated her calamities from the insult offered by Buondelmonte dei Buondelmonti to the Amidei in a broken marriage. Bologna never forgot the pathos of Imelda Lambertazzi stretched in death upon her lover Bonifazio Gieremi's corpse. The story of Romeo and Juliet at Verona is a myth which brings both factions into play, the well-meaning intervention of peace-making monks, and the ineffectual efforts of the Podestà to curb the violence of party warfare.

<sup>15</sup> This is the sting of Cacciaguida's scornful lamentation over Florence (*Par.* xvi).

Ma la cittadinanza, ch' e or mista  
Di Campi e di Certaldo e di Figghine,  
Pura vedease nell' ultimo artista.

\* \* \* \* \*  
Tal fatto e fiorentino, e cambia e merca,  
Che si sarebbe volta a Simifonti,  
Là dove andava l' avolo alla cerca.

\* \* \* \* \*  
Sempre la confusione delle persone  
Principio fu del mal della cittade,  
Come del corpo il cibo che s' appone.

So deep and dreadful was the discord, so utter the exhaustion, that the distracted Communes were fain at last to find some peace in tyranny. At the close of their long quarrel with the house of Hohenstauffen, the Popes called Charles of Anjou into Italy. The final issue of that policy for the nation at large will be discussed in another portion of this work. It is enough to point out here that, as Ezzelino da Romano introduced despotism in its worst form as a party leader of the Ghibellines, so Charles of Anjou became a typical tyrant in the Guelf interest. He was recognised as chief of the Guelf party by the Florentines, and the kingdom of the Two Sicilies was conferred upon him as the price of his dictatorship. The republics almost simultaneously entered upon a new phase. Democratised by the extension of the franchise, corrupted, to use Machiavelli's phrase, in their old organisation of the Popolo and Commune, they fell into the hands of tyrants, who employed the prestige of their party, the indifference of the Vigliacchi, and the peace-loving instincts of the middle class for the consolidation of their selfish autocracy.<sup>16</sup> Placing himself above the law, manipulating the machinery of the State for his own ends, substituting the will of a single ruler for the class of hostile passions in the factions, the tyrant imposed a forcible tranquillity upon the city he had grasped. The Captaincy of the people was conferred upon him.<sup>17</sup> The Councils were suffocated and reduced to silence. The aristocracy was persecuted for the profit of the plebs. Under his rule commerce flourished; the towns were adorned with splendid edifices; foreign wars were carried on for the aggrandisement of the State without regard to factious rancours. Thus the tyrant marked the first emergence of personality supreme within the State, resuming its old forces in an autocratic will, superseding and at the same time consciously controlling the mute, collective, blindly working impulses of previous revolutions. His advent was welcomed as a blessing by the recently developed people of the cities he reduced to peace. But the great families and leaders of the parties regarded him with loathing, as a reptile spawned by the corruption and disease of the decaying body politic. In their fury they addressed themselves to the two chiefs of Christendom. Boniface VIII., answering to this appeal, called in a second Frenchman, Charles of Valois, with the titles of Marquis of Ancona, Count of Romagna, Captain of Tuscany, who was

<sup>16</sup> Not to mention the republics of Lombardy and Romagna, which took the final stamp of despotism at the beginning of the fourteenth century, it is noticeable that Pisa submitted to Uguccione da Fagguola, Lucca to Castruccio Castracane, and Florence to the Duke of Athens. The revolution of Pisa in 1316 delivered it from Uguccione; the premature death of Castruccio in 1328 destroyed the Tuscan duchy he was building up upon the basement of Ghibellinism; while the rebellion of 1343 averted tyranny for Florence for another century.

<sup>17</sup> Machiavelli's *Vita di Castruccio Castracane*, though it is rather a historical romance than a trustworthy biography, illustrates the gradual advances made by a bold and ambitious leader from the Captaincy of the people, conferred upon him for one year, to the tyranny of his city.

bidden to reduce Italy to order on Gueff principles. Dante in his mountain solitudes invoked the Emperor, and Italy beheld the powerless march of Henry VII. Neither Pope nor Emperor was strong enough to control the currents of the factions which were surely whirling Italy into the abyss of despotism. Boniface died of grief after Sciarra Colonna, the terrible Ghibelline's outrage at Anagni, and the Papal Court was transferred to Avignon in 1316. Henry VII. expired, of poison probably, at Buonconvento, in 1313. The parties tore each other to fragments. Tyrants were murdered. Whole families were extirpated. Yet these convulsions bore no fruit of liberty. The only exit from the situation was in despotism—the despotism of a jealous oligarchy as at Florence, or the despotism of new tyrants in Lombardy and the Romagna.<sup>18</sup>

Meanwhile the perils to which the tyrants were exposed taught them to employ cruelty and craft in combination. From the confused and spasmodic efforts of the thirteenth century, when Captains of the people and leaders of the party seized a momentary gust of power, there arose a second sort of despotism, more cautious in its policy, more methodic in its use of means to ends, which ended by metamorphosing the Italian cities and preparing the great age of the Renaissance. It would be sentimental to utter lamentations over this change, and unphilosophical to deplore the diminution of republican liberty as an unmixed evil. The divisions of Italy and the weakness of both Papacy and Empire left no other solution of the political problem. All branches of the municipal administration, strained to the cracking-point by the tension of party conflict, were now isolated from the organism, abnormally developed, requiring the combining effort of a single thinker to reunite their scattered forces in one system or absorb them in himself. The indirect restraints which a calmer period of municipal vitality had placed upon tyrannic ambition were removed by the levelling of classes and the presentation of an equal surface to the builder of the palace-dome of monarchy. Moreover, it must be remembered that what the Italians then understood by freedom was municipal autonomy controlled by ruling houses in the interest of the few. These considerations need not check our sympathy with Florence in the warfare she carried on against the Milanese tyrants. But they should lead us to be cautious in adopting the conclusions of Sismondi, who saw Italian greatness only in her free cities. The obliteration of the parties beneath despotism was needed, under actual conditions, for that development of arts and in-

<sup>18</sup> The Divine Comedy is, under one of its aspects, the Epic of Italian tyranny, so many of its episodes are chosen from the history of the civil wars:

Che le terre d' Italia tutte piene  
Son di tiranni; ed un Marcel diventa  
Ogni villan che parteggiando viene.

These lines occur in the apostrophe to Italy (*Purg.* vi.), where Dante refers to the Empire, idealised by him as the supreme authority in Europe.

dustry which raised Italy to a first place among civilised nations. Of the manners of the Despots, and of the demoralisation they encouraged in the cities of their rule, enough will be said in the succeeding chapters, which set forth the social conditions of the Renaissance in Italy. But attention should here be called to the general character of despotic authority, and to the influence the Despots exercised for the pacification of the country. We are not justified by facts in assuming that had the free burghs continued independent, arts and literature would have risen to a greater height. Venice, in spite of an uninterrupted republican career, produced no commanding men of letters, and owed much of her splendour in the art of painting to aliens from Cadore, Castelfranco, and Verona. Genoa remained silent and irresponsible to the artistic movement of Italy until the last days of the republic, when her independence was but a shadow. Pisa, though a burgh of Tuscany, displayed no literary talent, while her architecture dates from the first period of the Commune. Siena, whose republican existence lasted longer even than that of Florence, contributed nothing of importance to Italian literature. The art of Perugia was developed during the ascendancy of despotic families. The paintings of the Milanese School owed its origin to Lodovico Sforza, and survived the tragic catastrophes of his capital, which suffered more than any other from the brutalities of Spaniards and Frenchmen. Next to Florence, the most brilliant centres of literary activity during the bright days of the Renaissance were princely Ferrara and royal Naples. Lastly, we might insist upon the fact that the Italian language took its first flight in the court of imperial Palermo, while republican Rome remained dumb throughout the earlier stage of Italian literary evolution. Thus the facts of the case seem to show that culture and Republican independence were not so closely united in Italy as some historians would seek to make us believe. On the other hand it is impossible to prove that the despotisms of the fifteenth century were necessary to the perfecting of art and literature. All that can be safely advanced upon this subject, is that the pacification of Italy was demanded as a preliminary condition, and that this pacification came to pass through the action of the princes, checked and equilibrated by the oligarchies of Venice and Florence. It might further be urged that the Despots were in close sympathy with the masses of the people, shared their enthusiasms, and promoted their industry. When the classical revival took place at the close of the fourteenth century, they divined this movement of the Italic races to resume their past, and gave it all encouragement. To be a prince and not to be the patron of scholarship, the pupil of humanists, and the founder of libraries, was an impossibility. In like manner they employed their wealth upon the development of arts and industries. The great age of Florentine painting is indissolubly connected with the memories of Casa Medici. Rome owes her magnificence to the despotic Popes. Even the pottery of Gubbio was a creation of the ducal house of Urbino.

After the death of Henry VII. and the beginning of the Papal exile at Avignon, the Guelf party became the rallying-point of municipal independence, with its headquarters in Florence. Ghibellinism united the princes in an opposite camp. 'The Guelf party,' writes Giovanni Villani, 'forms the solid and unalterable basis of Italian liberty, and is so antagonistic to all tyranny that, if a Guelf become a tyrant, he must of necessity become at the same moment Ghibelline.' Milan, first to assert the rights of the free burghs, was now the chief centre of despotism; and the events of the next century resume themselves in the long struggle between Florence and the Visconti. The chronicle of the Villani and the Florentine history of Poggio contain record of this strife, which seemed to them the all-important crisis of Italian affairs. In the Milanese annals of Galvano Fiamma and Mussi, on the other hand, the advantages of a despotic sovereignty in giving national coherence, the crimes of the Papacy, which promoted anarchy in its ill-governed States, and the prospect of a comprehensive Italian tyranny under the great house of the Visconti, are eloquently pleaded. The terms of the main issue being thus clearly defined, we may regard the warfare carried on by Bertrand du Poiet and Louis of Bavaria in the interests of Church and Empire, the splendid campaigns of Egidio d'Albornoz, and the delirious cruelty of Robert of Geneva, no less than the predatory excursions of Charles IV., as episodic. The main profits of those convulsions, which drowned Italy in blood during nearly all the fourteenth century, accrued to the Despots, who held their ground in spite of all attempts to dispossess them. The greater houses, notably the Visconti, acquired strength by revolutions in which the Church and Empire neutralised each other's action. The lesser families struck firm roots into cities, infuriated rather than intimidated by such acts of violence as the massacres of Faenza and Cesena in 1377. The relations of the imperial and pontifical parties were confused; while even in the centre of republican independence, at Florence, social changes, determined in great measure by the exhaustion of the city in its conflict, prepared the way for the Medicean tyranny. Neither the Church nor the Empire gained steady footing in Italy, while the prestige of both was ruined.<sup>19</sup> Municipal freedom, instead of being enlarged, was extinguished by the ambition of the Florentine oligarchs, who, while they spent the last florin of the Commune in opposing the Visconti, never missed an opportunity of enslaving the sister burghs of Tuscany. In a word, the destiny of the nation was irresistibly impelling it toward despotism.

In order to explain the continual prosperity of the princes amid the clash of forces brought to bear against them from so many sides, we

<sup>19</sup> Machiavelli, in his *Istorie Fiorentine* (Firenze, 1818, vol. i. pp. 47, 48), points out how the competition of the Church and Empire, during the Papacies of Benedict XII. and Clement VI. and the reign of Louis, strengthened the tyrants of Lombardy, Romagna, and the March. Each of the two contending powers gave away what did not belong to them, bidding against each other for any support they might obtain from the masters of the towns.



must remember that they were the partisans of social order in distracted burghs, the heroes of the middle classes and the multitude, the quellers of faction, the administrators of impartial laws, and the aggrandisers of the city at the expense of its neighbours. Ser Gorello, singing the praises of the Bishop Guido dei Tarlati di Pietra Mala, who ruled Arezzo in the first half of the fourteenth century, makes the Commune say,<sup>20</sup> 'He was the lord so valiant and magnificent, so full of grace and daring, so agreeable to both Guelfs and Ghibellines. He, for his virtue, was chosen by common consent to be the master of my people. Peace and justice were the beginning, middle, and end of his lordship, which removed all discord from the State. By the greatness of his valour I grew in territory round about. Every neighbour revered me, some through love and some through dread; for it was dear to them to rest beneath his mantle.' These verses set forth the qualities which united the mass of the populations to their new lords. The Despot delivered the industrial classes from the tyranny and anarchy of faction, substituting a reign of personal terrorism that weighed more heavily upon the nobles than upon the artisans or peasants. Ruling more by perfidy, corruption, and fraud than by the sword, he turned the leaders of parties into courtiers, brought proscribed exiles back into the city as officials, flattered local vanity by continuing the municipal machinery in its functions of parade, and stopped the mouths of unruly demagogues by making it their pecuniary interest to preach his benefits abroad. So long as the burghers remained peaceable beneath his sway and refrained from attacking him in person, he was mild. But at the same moment the gallows, the torture-chamber, the iron cage suspended from the giddy height of palace-roof or church-tower, and the dreadful dungeons, where a prisoner could neither stand nor lie at ease, were ever ready for the man who dared dispute his authority. That authority depended solely on his personal qualities of will, courage, physical endurance. He held it by intelligence, being as it were an artificial product of political necessities, an equilibrium of forces, substituted without legal title for the Church and Empire, and accumulating in his despotic individuality the privileges previously acquired by centuries of Consuls, Podestàs, and Captains of the people. The chief danger he had to fear was conspiracy; and in providing himself against this peril he expended all the resources suggested by refined ingenuity and heightened terror. Yet, when the Despot was attacked and murdered, it followed of necessity that the successful conspirator became in turn a tyrant. 'Cities,' wrote Machiavelli,<sup>21</sup> 'that are once corrupt and accustomed to the rule of princes, can never acquire freedom, even though the prince with all his kin be extirpated. One prince is needed to ex-

<sup>20</sup> *Mur. Scr. R. It.* xv. 826. Compare what G. Merula wrote about Azzo Visconti: 'He conciliated the people to him by equal justice without distinction of Guelf or Ghibelline.'

<sup>21</sup> *Discorsi*, i. 17.



tinguish another; and the city has no rest except by the creation of a new lord, unless it chance that one burgher by his goodness and great qualities may during his lifetime preserve its temporary independence.' Palace intrigues, therefore, took the place of Piazza revolutions, and dynasties were swept away to make room for new tyrants without material change in the conditions of the populace.

It was the universal policy of the Despots to disarm their subjects. Prompted by consideration of personal safety, and demanded by the necessity of extirpating the factions, this measure was highly popular. It relieved the burghers of that most burdensome of all public duties, military service. A tax on silver and salt was substituted in the Milanese province for the conscription, while the Florentine oligarchs, actuated probably by the same motives, laid a tax upon the country. The effect of this change was to make financial and economical questions all-important, and to introduce a new element into the balance of Italian powers. The principalities were transformed into great banks, where the lords of cities sat in their bureau, counted their money, and calculated the cost of wars or the value of towns they sought to acquire by bargain. At first they used their mercenary troops like pawns, buying up a certain number for some special project, and dismissing them when it had been accomplished. But in course of time the mercenaries awoke to the sense of their own power, and placed themselves beneath captains who secured them a certainty of pay with continuity of profitable service. Thus the Condottieri came into existence, and Italy beheld the spectacle of moving despotisms, armed and mounted, seeking to effect establishment upon the weakest, worst-defended points of the peninsula. They proved a grave cause of disquietude alike to the tyrants and the republics; and until the settlement of Francesco Sforza in the Duchy of Milan, when the employers of auxiliaries had come to understand the arts of dealing with them by perfidy, secret assassination, and a system of elaborate counter-checks, the equilibrium of power in Italy was seriously threatened. The country suffered at first from marauding excursions conducted by piratical leaders of adventurous troops, by Werner of Urslingen, the Conte Lando, and Fra Moriale; afterwards from the discords of Braccio da Montone and Sforza Attendolo; incessantly plotting to carve duchies for themselves from provinces they had been summoned by a master to subdue. At this period gold ruled the destinies of Italy. The Despots, relying solely on their exchequer for their power, were driven to extortion. Cities became bankrupt, pledged their revenues, or sold themselves to the highest bidder.<sup>22</sup> Indescribable misery oppressed the poorer classes and the peasants. A series of

<sup>22</sup> Perugia, for example, farmed out the tax upon her country population for 12,000 florins, upon her baking-houses for 7,266, upon her wine for 4,000, upon her lake for 5,200, upon contracts for 1,500. Two bankers accepted the Perugian loan at this price in 1388.

obscure revolutions in the smaller despotic centres pointed to a vehement plebian reaction against a state of things that had become unbearable. The lower classes of the burghers rose against the 'popolani grassi,' and a new class of princes emerged at the close of the crisis. Thus the plebs forced the Bentivogli on Bologna and the Medici on Florence; the Baglioni on Perugia and the Petrucci on Siena.

The emergence of the Condottieri at the beginning of the fourteenth century, the anarchy they encouraged for their own aggrandisement, and the financial distress which ensued upon the substitution of mercenary for civic warfare, completed the democratisation of the Italian cities, and marked a new period in the history of despotism. From the date of Francesco Sforza's entry into Milan as conqueror in 1450, the princes became milder in their exercise of power and less ambitious. Having begun by disarming their subjects, they now proceeded to lay down arms themselves, employing small forces for the protection of their person and the State, engaging more cautiously in foreign strife, and substituting diplomacy, wherever it was possible, for warfare. Gold still ruled in politics, but it was spent in bribery. To the ambitious military schemes of Gian Galeazzo Visconti succeeded the commercial cynicism of Cosimo d' Medici, who enslaved Florence by astute demoralisation.<sup>23</sup> The spirit of the age was materialistic and positive. The Despots held their state by treachery, craft, and corruption. The element of force being virtually eliminated, intelligence at last gained undivided sway; and the ideal statecraft of Machiavelli was realised with more or less completeness in all parts of the peninsula. At this moment and by these means Italy obtained a brief but golden period of peace beneath the confederation of her great powers. Nicholas V. had restored the Papal Court to Rome in 1447, where he assumed the manners of despotism and counted as one among the Italian Signori. Lombardy remained tranquil under the rule of Francesco Sforza, and Tuscany under that of the Casa Medici. The kingdom of Naples, conquered by Alfonso of Aragon in 1442, was equally ruled in the spirit of enlightened despotism, while Venice, who had so long formed a state apart, by her recent acquisition of a domain on terra firma, entered the community of Italian politics. Thus the country had finally resolved itself into five grand constituent elements—the Duchy of Milan, the Republic of S. Mark, Florence, Rome, and the kingdom of Naples—all of them, though widely differing in previous history and constitutional peculiarities, now animated by a common spirit.<sup>24</sup> Politically they tended to despotism; for though Venice continued to be a republic, the

<sup>23</sup> I have attempted to analyse Cosimo's method in the article on 'Florence and the Medici,' *Studies and Sketches in Italy*.

<sup>24</sup> This centralisation of Italy in five great powers was not obtained without the depression or total extinction of smaller cities. Ferrari counts seventeen towns, who died, to use his forcible expression, at the close of the civil wars. *Storia delle Rivoluzioni d'Italia*, iii. 239.

government of the Venetian oligarchy was but despotism put into commission. Intellectually, the same enthusiasm for classical studies, the same artistic energy, and the same impulse to revive Italian literature brought the several centres of the nation into keener sympathy than they had felt before. A network of diplomacy embraced the cities; and round the leaders of the confederation were grouped inferior burghs, republican or tyrannical as the case might be, like satellites around the luminaries of a solar system. When Constantinople was taken by the Turks in 1453, Italy felt the need of suppressing her old jealousies, and Nicholas V. induced the four great powers to sign with him a treaty of peace and amity. The political tact and sagacity of Lorenzo de' Medici enabled him to develop and substantiate the principle of balance then introduced into Italian politics; nor was there any apparent reason why the equilibrium so hardly won, so skilfully maintained, should not have subsisted but for Lodovico Sforza's invitation to the French in 1494. Up to that date the more recent wars of Italy had been principally caused by the encroachments of Venice and the nepotism of successive Popes. They raised no new enthusiasm hostile to the interests of peace. The Empire was eliminated and forgotten as an obsolete antiquity. Italy seemed at last determined to manage her own affairs by mutual agreement between the five great powers.

Still the ground beneath this specious fabric of diplomacy rung hollow. The tyrannies represented a transient political necessity. They were not the product of progressive social growth, satisfying and regulating organic functions of the nation. Far from being the final outcome of a slow, deliberate accretion in the states they had absorbed, we see in them the climax of conflicting humours, the splendid cancers and imposthumes of a desperate disease. That solid basis of national morality which grounds the monarch firm upon the sympathies and interests of the people whom he seems to lead, but whom he in reality expresses, failed them. Therefore each individual Despot trembled for his throne, while Italy, as in the ominous picture drawn by her historian, felt that all the elements were combining to devour her with a coming storm. The land of earthquakes divined a cataclysm, to cope with which she was unable. An apparently insignificant event determined the catastrophe. The Sforza appealed to France, and after the disastrous descent of Charles VIII. the whole tide of events turned. Instead of internal self-government by any system of balance, Italy submitted to a succession of invasions terminating in foreign tyranny.

The problem why the Italians failed to achieve the unity of a coherent nation has been implicitly discussed in the foregoing pages upon the history of the Communes and the development of despotism. We have already seen that their conception of municipal independence made a narrow oligarchy of enfranchised burghers lords of the city, which in its turn oppressed the country and the subject burghs of its domain. Every conquest by a republic reduced some village or centre of civil life

to the condition of serfdom. The voices of the inhabitants were no longer heard debating questions that affected their interests. They submitted to dictation from their masters, the enfranchised few in the ascendent commonwealth. Thus, as Guicciardini pointed out in his 'Considerations on the Discourses of Machiavelli,' the subjection of Italy by a dominant republic would have meant the extinction of numberless political communities and the sway of a close oligarchy from the Alps to the Ionian Sea.<sup>25</sup> The 3,200 burghers who constituted Florence in 1494, or the nobles of the Golden Book at Venice, would by such unification of the country under a victorious republic have become sovereigns, administering the resources of the nation for their profit. The dread of this catastrophe rendered Venice odious to her sister commonwealths at the close of the fifteenth century, and justified, according to Guicciardini's views of history, the action taken by Cosimo de' Medici in 1450, when he rendered Milan strong by supporting her despot, Francesco Sforza.<sup>26</sup> In a word, republican freedom, as the term is now understood, was unknown in Italy. Municipal autonomy, implying the right of the municipality to rule its conquests for its own particular profit, was the dominant idea. To have advanced from this stage of thought to the highly developed conception of a national republic, centralising the forces of Italy and at the same time giving free play to its local energies, would have been impossible. This kind of republican unity implies a previous unification of the people in some other form of government. It furthermore demands a system of representation extended to all sections of the nation. Their very nature, therefore, prevented the republican institutions won by the Italians in the early Middle Ages from sufficing for their independence in a national republic.

It may with more reason be asked in the next place why Italy did not become a monarchy, and again why she never produced a confederation, uniting the Communes as the Swiss Cantons were combined for mutual support and self-defence. When we attack the first of these two questions, our immediate answer must be that the Italians had a rooted disinclination for monarchical union.<sup>27</sup> Their most strenuous efforts were directed against it when it seemed to threaten them. It may be remembered that they were not a new people, needing concentration to secure their bare existence. Even during the great days of ancient Rome they had not been what we are wont to call a nation, but a con-

<sup>25</sup> *Op. Ined.* vol. i. p. 28.

<sup>26</sup> *Ib.* vol. iii. p. 8.

<sup>27</sup> Guicciardini (*Op. Ined.* i. 29) remarks: 'O sia per qualche fato d' Italia, o per la complessione degli uomini temperata in modo che hanno ingegno e forze, non è mai questa provincia stata facile a ridursi sotto uno imperio.' He speaks again of her disinclination as 'quello modo di vivere che è più secondo la antiquissima consuetudine e inclinazione sua.' But Guicciardini, with that defect of vision which rendered him incapable of appreciating the whole situation while he analysed its details so profoundly, was reckoning without the great nations of Europe. See above, p. 24.

federacy of municipalities governed and directed by the mistress of the globe. When Rome passed away, the fragments of the body politic in Italy, though rudely shaken, retained some portion of the old vitality that joined them to the past. It was to the past rather than the future that the new Italians looked; and even as they lacked initiative forces in their literature, so in their political systems they ventured on no fresh beginning. Though Rome herself was ruined, the shadow of the name of Rome, the mighty memory of Roman greatness, still abode with them. Instead of a modern capital and a modern king, they had an idea for their rallying-point, a spiritual city for their metropolis. Nor was there any immediate reason why they should have sacrificed their local independence in order to obtain the security afforded by a sovereign. It was not till a later epoch that Italy learned by bitter experience that unity at any cost would be acceptable, face to face with the organised armies of modern Europe. But when the chance of securing that safeguard was offered in the Middle Ages, it must have been bought by subjection to foreigners, by toleration of feudalism, by the extinction of Roman culture in the laws and customs of barbarians. Thus it is not too much to say that the Italians themselves rejected it. Moreover, the problem of unifying Italy in a monarchy was never so practically simple as that of forming nations out of the Teutonic tribes. Not only was the instinct of clanship absent, but before the year 800 all attempts to establish a monarchical state were thwarted by the still formidable proximity of the Greek Empire and by the growing power of ecclesiastical Rome. We have seen how the Goths erred by submitting to the Empire and merging their authority in a declining organisation. We have seen again how the Lombards erred by adopting Catholic Christianity and thus entangling themselves in the policy of Papal Rome. Both Goths and Lombards committed the mistake of sparing the Eternal City; or it may be more accurate to say that neither of them were strong enough to lay hands of violence upon the sacred and mysterious metropolis and hold it as their seat of monarchy against the world. So long as Rome remained independent, neither Ravenna nor Pavia could head a kingdom in the peninsula. Meanwhile Rome lent her prestige to the advancement of a spiritual power which, subject to no dynastic weakness, with the persistent force of an idea that cannot die, was bent on subjugating Europe. The Papacy needed Italy as the basis of its operations, and could not brook a rival that might reduce the See of S. Peter to the level of an ordinary bishopric. Rome, therefore, generation after generation, upheld the so-called liberties of Italy against all comers; and when she summoned the Franks, it was to break the growing power of the Lombard monarchs. The pact between the Popes and Charles the Great, however we may interpret its meaning, still further removed the possibility of a kingdom by dividing Italy into two sections with separate allegiances; and since the sway of neither Pope nor Emperor, the one unarmed the other absent, was stringent enough to check the growth of independent cities, a third and all-

important factor was added to the previous checks upon national unity.

After 1200 the problem changes its aspect. We have now to ask ourselves why, when the struggle with the Empire was over, when Frederick Barbarossa had been defeated at Legnano, when the Lombard and the Tuscan Leagues were in full vigour, before the Guelph and Ghibelline factions had confused the mainsprings of political activity, and while the national militia was still energetic, the Communes did not advance from the conception of local and municipal independence to that of national freedom in a confederacy similar to the Swiss Bund. The Italians, it may be suggested, saw no immediate necessity for a confederation that would have limited the absolute autonomy of their several parcels. Only the light cast by subsequent events upon their early history makes us perceive that they missed an unique opportunity at this moment. What they then desired was freedom for expansion each after his own political type, freedom for the development of industry and commerce, freedom for the social organisation of the city beloved by its burghers above the nation as a whole. Special difficulties, moreover, lay in the way of confederation. The Communes were not districts, like the Swiss Cantons, but towns at war with the Contado round them and at war among themselves. Mutually jealous and mistrustful, with a country population that but partially obeyed their rule, these centres of Italian freedom were in a very different position from the peasant communities of Schwytz, Uri, Unterwalden. Italy, moreover, could not have been federally united without the consent of Naples and the Church. The kingdom of the Two Sicilies, rendered definitely monarchical by the Norman Conquest, offered a serious obstacle; and though the Regno might have been defied and absorbed by a vigorous concerted movement from the North and centre, there still remained the opposition of the Papacy. It had been the recent policy of the Popes to support the free burghs in their war with Frederick. But they did this only because they could not tolerate a rival near their base of spiritual power; and the very reasons which had made them side with the cities in the wars of liberation would have roused their hostility against a federative union. To have encouraged an Italian Bund, in the midst of which they would have found the Church unarmed and on a level with the puissant towns of Lombardy and Tuscany, must have seemed to them a suicidal error. Such a coalition, if attempted, could not but have been opposed with all their might; for the whole history of Italy proves that Machiavelli was right when he asserted that the Church had persistently maintained the nation in disunion for the furtherance of her own selfish ends. We have furthermore to add the prestige which the Empire preserved for the Italians, who failed to conceive of any civilised human society whereof the representative of Cæsar should not be the God-appointed head. Though the material power of the Emperors was on the wane, it still existed as a dominant idea. Italy was still the Garden of the Empire no less than the Throne of Christ on earth. After the burghs

had wrung what they regarded as their reasonable rights and privileges from Frederick, they laid down their arms, and were content to flourish beneath the imperial shadow. To raise up a political association as a bulwark against the Holy Roman Empire, and by the formation of this defence to become an independent and united nation, instead of remaining an aggregate of scattered townships, would have seemed to their minds little short of sacrilege. Up to this point the Church and the Empire had been, theoretically at least, concordant. They were the sun and moon of a sacred social system which ruled Europe with light and might. But the Wars of Investiture placed them in antagonism, and the result of that quarrel was still further to divide the Italians, still further to remove the hope of national unity into the region of things unattainable. The great parties accentuated communal jealousies and gave external form and substance to the struggles of town with town. So far distant was the possibility of confederation on a grand scale that every city strove within itself to establish one of two contradictory principles, and the energies of the people were expended in a struggle that set neighbour against neighbour on the field of war and in the market-place. The confusion, exhaustion, and demoralisation engendered by these conflicts determined the advent of the Despots; and after 1400 Italy could only have been united under a tyrant's iron rule. At such an universal despotism Gian Galeazzo Visconti was aiming when the plague cut short his schemes. Cesare Borgia played his highest stakes for it. Leo X. dreamed of it for his family. Machiavelli, at the end of the 'Principe,' when the tragedy of Italy was almost accomplished, invoked it. But even for this last chance of unification it was now too late. The great nations of Europe were in movement, and the destinies of Italy depended upon France and Spain. When Charles V. remained victor in the struggle of the sixteenth century, he stereotyped and petrified the divisions of Italy in the interest of his own dynastic policy. The only Italian power that remained unchangeable throughout all changes was the Papacy—the first to emerge into prominence after the decay of the old Western Empire, the last to suffer diminution in spite of vicissitudes, humiliations, schisms, and internal transformation. As the Papacy had created and maintained a divided Italy, as it had opposed itself to every successive prospect of unification, so it survived the extinction of Italian independence, and lent its aid to that imperial tyranny whereby the disunion of the nation was confirmed and prolonged till the present century.



## CHAPTER III

### THE AGE OF THE DESPOTS

*Salient Qualities of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries in Italy—Relation of Italy to the Empire and to the Church—The Illegitimate Title of Italian Potentates—The Free Emergence of Personality—Frederick II. and the Influence of his Example—Ezzelino da Romano—Six Sorts of Italian Despots—Feudal Seigneurs—Vicars of the Empire—Captains of the People—Condottieri—Nephews and Sons of Popes—Eminent Burghers—Italian Incapacity for Self-Government in Commonwealths—Forcible Tenure of Power encouraged Personal Ability—The Condition of the Despot's Life—Instances of Domestic Crime in the Ruling Houses—Macaulay's Description of the Italian Tyrant—Savonarola's and Matteo Villani's Description of a Tyrant—The Absorption of Smaller by Greater Tyrannies in the Fourteenth Century—History of the Visconti—Francesco Sforza—The Part played in Italian Politics by Military Leaders—Mercenary Warfare—Alberico da Barbiano, Braccio da Montone, Sforza Attendolo—History of the Sforza Dynasty—The Murder of Galeazzo Maria Sforza—The Ethics of Tyrannicide in Italy—Relation of the Despots to Arts and Letters—Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta—Duke Federigo of Urbino—The School of Vittorino and the Court of Urbino—The Cortegiano of Castiglione—The Ideals of the Italian Courtier and the Modern Gentleman—General Retrospect.*

THE fourteenth and fifteenth centuries may be called the Age of the Despots in Italian history, as the twelfth and thirteenth are the Age of the Free Burghs, and as the sixteenth and seventeenth are the Age of Foreign Enslavement. It was during the age of the Despots that the conditions of the Renaissance were evolved, and that the Renaissance itself assumed a definite character in Italy. Under tyrannies, in the midst of intrigues, wars, and revolutions, the peculiar individuality of the Italians obtained its ultimate development. This individuality, as remarkable for salient genius and diffused talent as for self-conscious and deliberate vice, determined the qualities of the Renaissance and affected by example the whole of Europe. Italy led the way in education of the Western races, and was the first to realise the type of modern as distinguished from classical and mediæval life.

During this age of the Despots, Italy presents the spectacle of a nation devoid of central government and comparatively uninfluenced by feudalism. The right of the Emperor had become nominal, and served as a pretext for usurpers rather than as a source of order. The visits, for instance, of Charles IV. and Frederick III. were either begging expeditions or holiday excursions, in the course of which ambitious adventurers bought titles to the government of towns, and meaningless honours were showered upon vain courtiers. It was not till the reign



of Maximilian that Germany adopted a more serious policy with regard to Italy, which by that time had become the central point of European intrigue. Charles V. afterwards used force to reassert imperial rights over the Italian cities, acting not so much in the interest of the Empire as for the aggrandisement of the Spanish monarchy. At the same time the Papacy, which had done so much to undermine the authority of the Empire, exercised a power at once anomalous and ill-recognised except in the immediate States of the Church. By the extinction of the House of Hohenstauffen and by the assumed right to grant the investiture of the kingdom of Naples to foreigners, the Popes not only struck a death-blow at imperial influence, but also prepared the way for their own exile to Avignon. This involved the loss of the second great authority to which Italy had been accustomed to look for the maintenance of some sort of national coherence. Moreover, the Church, though impotent to unite all Italy beneath her own sway, had power enough to prevent the formation either by Milan or Venice or Naples of a substantial kingdom. The result was a perpetually recurring process of composition, dismemberment, and recomposition, under different forms, of the scattered elements of Italian life. The Guelf and Ghibelline parties, inherited from the wars of the thirteenth century, survived the political interests which had given them birth, and proved an insurmountable obstacle, long after they had ceased to have any real significance, to the pacification of the country.<sup>1</sup> The only important state which maintained an unbroken dynastic succession of however disputed a nature at this period was the kingdom of the Two Sicilies. The only great republics were Venice, Genoa, and Florence. Of these, Genoa, after being reduced in power and prosperity by Venice, was overshadowed by the successive lords of Milan; while Florence was destined at the end of a long struggle to fall beneath a family of despots. All the rest of Italy, especially to the north of the Apennines, was the battlefield of tyrants, whose title was illegitimate—based, that is to say, on no feudal principle, derived in no regular manner from the Empire, but generally held as a gift or extorted as a prize from the predominant parties in the great towns.

If we examine the constitution of these tyrannies, we find abundant proofs of their despotic nature. The succession from father to son was always uncertain. Legitimacy of birth was hardly respected. The last La Scalas were bastards. The house of Aragon in Naples descended from a bastard. Gabriello Visconti shared with his half-brothers the heritage of Gian Galeazzo. The line of the Medici was continued by princes of more than doubtful origin. Suspicion rested on the birth of Frederick of Urbino. The houses of Este and Malatesta honoured their bastards in the same degree as their lawful progeny.

<sup>1</sup> So late as 1526 we find the burlesque poet Folengo exclaiming (*Orlandino*, ii. 59)—  
Chè se non fusser le gran parti in quella,  
Dominerebbe il mondo Italian bella.

The great family of the Bentivogli at Bologna owed their importance at the end of the fifteenth century to an obscure and probably spurious pretender, dragged from the wool-factories of Florence by the policy of Cosimo de' Medici. The sons of Popes ranked with the proudest of aristocratic families. Nobility was less regarded in the choice of a ruler than personal ability. Power once acquired was maintained by force, and the history of the ruling families is one long catalogue of crimes. Yet the cities thus governed were orderly and prosperous. Police regulations were carefully established and maintained by governors whose interest it was to rule a quiet state. Culture was widely diffused without regard to rank or wealth. Public edifices of colossal grandeur were multiplied. Meanwhile the people at large were being fashioned to that self-conscious and intelligent activity which is fostered by the modes of life peculiar to political and social centres in a condition of continued rivalry and change.

Under the Italian despotisms we observe nearly the opposite of all the influences brought to bear in the same period upon the nations of the North. There is no gradual absorption of the great vassals in monarchies, no fixed allegiance to a reigning dynasty, no feudal aid or military service attached to the tenure of the land, no tendency to centralise the whole intellectual activity of the race in any capital, no suppression of individual character by strongly biassed public feeling, by immutable law, or by the superincumbent weight of a social hierarchy. Everything, on the contrary, tends to the free emergence of personal passions and personal aims. Though the vassals of the Despot are neither his soldiers nor his loyal lieges, but his courtiers and taxpayers, the continual object of his cruelty and fear, yet each subject has the chance of becoming a prince like Sforza or a companion of princes like Petrarch. Equality of servitude goes far to democratise a nation, and common hatred of the tyrant leads to the combination of all classes against him. Thence follows the fermentation of arrogant and self-reliant passions in the breasts of the lowest as well as the highest.<sup>2</sup> The rapid mutations of government teach men to care for themselves and to depend upon themselves alone in the battle of the world; while the necessity of craft and policy in the conduct of complicated affairs sharpens intelligence. The sanction of all means that may secure an end under conditions of social violence encourages versatility unprejudiced by moral considerations. At the same time the freely indulged vices of the sovereign are an example of self-indulgence to the subject, and his need of lawless instruments is a practical sanction of force in all its forms. Thus to the play of personality, whether in combat with society and rivals, or in the gratification of individual caprice, every liberty is allowed. Might is substituted for right, and the sense of law is supplanted by a mere dread of coercion. What is

<sup>2</sup> See Guicciardini, 'Dialogo del Reggimento di Firenze,' *Op. Ined.* vol. ii. p. 53, for a critique of the motives of tyrannicide in Italy.

the wonder if a Benvenuto Cellini should be the outcome of the same society as that which formed a Cesare Borgia? What is the miracle if Italy under these circumstances produced original characters and many-sided intellects in greater profusion than any other nation at any other period, with the single exception of Greece on her emergence from the age of her Despots? It was the misfortune of Italy that the age of the Despots was succeeded, not by an age of free political existence, but by one of foreign servitude.

Frederick II. was at the same time the last emperor who maintained imperial sway in Italy in person, and also the beginner of a new system of government which the Despots afterwards pursued. His establishment of the Saracen colony at Nocera, as the nucleus of an army ready to fulfil his orders with scrupulous disregard for Italian sympathies and customs, taught all future rulers to reduce their subjects to a state of unarmed passivity, and to carry on their wars by the aid of German, English, Swiss, Gascon, Breton, or Hungarian mercenaries, as the case might be. Frederick, again, derived from his Mussulman predecessors in Sicily the arts of taxation to the utmost limits of the national capacity, and founded a precedent for the levying of tolls by a Catasto or schedule of the properties attributed to each individual in the state. He also destroyed the self-government of burghs and districts, by retaining for himself the right to nominate officers, and by establishing a system of judicial jurisdiction which derived authority from the throne. Again, he introduced the example of a prince making profit out of the industries of his subjects by monopolies and protective duties. In this path he was followed by illustrious successors—especially by Sixtus IV. and Alfonso II. of Aragon, who enriched themselves by trafficking in the corn and olive-oil of their famished provinces. Lastly, Frederick established the precedent of a court formed upon the model of that of Oriental Sultans, in which chamberlains and secretaries took the rank of hereditary nobles, and functions of state were confided to the body-servants of the monarch. This court gave currency to those habits of polite culture, magnificent living, and personal luxury which played so prominent a part in all subsequent Italian despotism. It is tempting to overstrain a point in estimating the direct influence of Frederick's example. In many respects doubtless he was merely somewhat in advance of his age; and what we may be inclined to ascribe to him personally, would have followed in the natural evolution of events. Yet it remains a fact that he first realised the type of cultivated despotism which prevailed throughout Italy in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Italian literature began in his court, and many Saracenic customs of statecraft were transmitted through him from Palermo to Lombardy.

While Frederick foreshadowed the comparatively modern tyrants of the coming age, his Vicar in the North of Italy, Ezzelino da Romano, represented the atrocities towards which they always tended to degenerate. Regarding himself with a sort of awful veneration as the divine-

ly appointed scourge of humanity, this monster in his lifetime was execrated as an aberration from the 'kindly race of men,' and after his death he became the hero of a fiendish mythus. But in the succeeding centuries of Italian history his kind was only too common; the immorality with which he worked out his selfish aims was systematically adopted by princes like the Visconti, and reduced to rule by theorists like Machiavelli. Ezzelino, a small, pale, wiry man, with terror in his face and enthusiasm for evil in his heart, lived a foe to luxury, cold to the pathos of children, dead to the enchantment of women. His one passion was the greed of power, heightened by the lust for blood. Originally a noble of the Veronese Marches, he founded his illegal authority upon the captaincy of the Imperial party delegated to him by Frederick. Verona, Vicenza, Padua, Feltre, and Belluno made him their captain in the Ghibelline interest, conferring on him judicial as well as military supremacy. How he fearfully abused his power, how a crusade was preached against him,<sup>3</sup> and how he died in silence like a boar at bay, rending from his wounds the dressings that his foes had placed to keep him alive are notorious matters of history. At Padua alone he erected eight prisons, two of which contained as many as three hundred captives each; and though the executioner never ceased to ply his trade there, they were always full. These dungeons were designed to torture by their noisomeness, their want of air, and light and space. Ezzelino made himself terrible not merely by executions and imprisonments but also by mutilations and torments. When he captured Friola he caused the population, of all ages, sexes, occupations, to be deprived of their eyes, noses, and legs, and to be cast forth to the mercy of the elements. On another occasion he walled up a family of princes in a castle and left them to die of famine. Wealth, eminence, and beauty attracted his displeasure no less than insubordination or disobedience. Nor was he less crafty than cruel. Sons betrayed their fathers, friends their comrades, under the fallacious safeguard of his promises. A gigantic instance of his scheming was the coup-de-main by which he succeeded in entrapping 11,000 Paduan soldiers, only 200 of whom escaped the miseries of his prisons. Thus by his absolute contempt of law, his inordinate cruelty, his prolonged massacres, and his infliction of plagues upon whole peoples, Ezzelino established the ideal in Italy of a tyrant marching to his end by any means whatever. In vain was the humanity of the race revolted by the hideous spectacle. Vainly did the monks assemble pity-stricken multitudes upon the plain of Paquara to atone with tears and penitence for the insults offered to the saints in heaven by Ezzelino's fury. It laid a deep hold upon the Italian imagination, and, by the glamour of loathing that has strength to fascinate, proved in the end contagious. We are apt to ask ourselves whether such men are mad—whether in the case of a Nero or a

<sup>3</sup> Alexander IV. issued letters for this crusade in 1255. It was preached next year by the Archbishop of Ravenna.

Maréchal de Retz or an Ezzelino the love of evil and the thirst for blood are not a monomaniacal perversion of barbarous passions which even in a cannibal are morbid.<sup>4</sup> Is there in fact such a thing as *Hæmatomania*, Blood-madness? But if we answer this question in the affirmative, we shall have to place how many Visconti, Sforzeschi, Malatesti, Borgias, Farnesi, and princes of the houses of Anjou and Aragon in the list of these maniacs? Ezzelino was indeed only the first of a long and horrible procession, the most terror-striking because the earliest, prefiguring all the rest.

Ezzelino's cruelty was no mere Berserkir fury or Lycanthropia coming over him in gusts and leaving him exhausted. It was steady and continuous. In his madness, if such we may call this inhumanity, there was method; he used it to the end of the consolidation of his tyranny. Yet, inasmuch as it passed all limits and prepared his downfall, it may be said to have obtained over his nature the mastery of an insane appetite. While applying the nomenclature of disease to these exceptional monsters, we need not allow that their atrocities were, at first at any rate, beyond their control. Moral insanity is often nothing more than the hypertrophy of some vulgar passion—lust, violence, cruelty, jealousy, and the like. The tyrant, placed above law and less influenced by public opinion than a private person, may easily allow a greed for pleasure or a love of bloodshed to acquire morbid proportions in his nature. He then is not unjustly termed a monomaniac. Within the circle of his vitiated appetite he proves himself irrational. He becomes the puppet of passions which the sane man cannot so much as picture to his fancy, the victim of desire, ever recurring and ever destined to remain unsatisfied; nor is any hallucination more akin to lunacy than the mirage of a joy that leaves the soul thirstier than it was before, the paroxysm of unnatural pleasure which wearies the nerves that crave for it.

In Frederick, the modern autocrat, and Ezzelino, the legendary tyrant, we obtain the earliest specimens of two types of despotism in Italy. Their fame long after their death powerfully affected the fancy of the people, worked itself into the literature of the Italians, and created a consciousness of tyranny in the minds of irresponsible rulers.

During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries we find, roughly speaking, six sorts of despots in Italian cities.<sup>5</sup> Of these the *first* class, which is a very small one, had a dynastic or hereditary right accruing from long seignorial possession of their several districts. The most eminent are the houses of Monteferrat and Savoy, the Marquises of Ferrara, the Princes of Urbino. At the same time it is difficult to know where to draw the line between such hereditary lordship as that of the Este family, and tyranny based on popular favour. The Malatesti of

<sup>4</sup> See Appendix, No. I.

<sup>5</sup> This classification must of necessity be imperfect, since many of the tyrannies belong in part to two or more of the kinds which I have mentioned.

Rimini, Polentani of Ravenna, Manfredi of Faenza, Ordelaifi of Forlì, Chiavelli of Fabriano, Varani of Camerino, and others, might claim to rank among the former, since their cities submitted to them without a long period of republican independence like that which preceded despotism in the cases to be next mentioned. Yet these families styled themselves Captains of the burghs they ruled; and in many instances they obtained the additional title of Vicars of the Church.<sup>6</sup> Even the Estensi were made hereditary captains of Ferrara at the end of the thirteenth century, while they also acknowledged the supremacy of the Papacy. There was in fact no right outside the Empire in Italy; and Despots of whatever origin or complexion gladly accepted the support which a title derived from the Empire, the Church, or the People might give. Brought to the front amid the tumults of the civil wars, and accepted as pacificators of the factions by the multitude, they gained the confirmation of their anomalous authority by representing themselves to be lieutenants or vice-gerents of the three great powers. The *second* class comprise those nobles who obtained the title of Vicars of the Empire, and built an illegal power upon the basis of imperial right in Lombardy. Of these, the Della Scala and Visconti families are illustrious instances. Finding in their official capacity a ready-made foundation, they extended it beyond its just limits, and in defiance of the Empire constituted dynasties. The *third* class is important. Nobles charged with military or judicial power, as Capitani or Podestàs, by the free burghs, used their authority to enslave the cities they were chosen to administer. It was thus that almost all the numerous tyrants of Lombardy, Carraresi at Padua, Gonzaghi at Mantua, Rossi and Correggi at Parma, Torrensi and Visconti at Milan, Scotti at Piacenza, and so forth, first erected their despotic dynasties. This fact in the history of Italian tyranny is noticeable. The fount of honour, so to speak, was in the citizens of these great burghs. Therefore, when the limits of authority delegated to their captains by the people were overstepped, the sway of the princes became confessedly illegal. Illegality carried with it all the consequences of an evil conscience, all the insecurities of usurped dominion, all the danger from without and from within to which an arbitrary governor is exposed. In the *fourth* class we find the principle of force still more openly at work. To it may be assigned those Condottieri who made a prey of cities at their pleasure. The illustrious Uguccione della Faggiuola, who neglected to follow up his victory over the Guelfs at Monte Catini, in order that he might cement his power in Lucca and Pisa, is an early instance of this kind of tyrant. His successor, Castruccio Castracane, the hero of Machiavelli's romance, is another. But it was not until the first half of the fifteenth century that professional Condottieri became powerful enough to found such kingdoms as that, for example, of Francesco

<sup>6</sup> See Guicc. *Ist.* end of Book 4.

Sforza at Milan.<sup>7</sup> The *fifth* class includes the nephews or sons of Popes. The Riario principality of Forlì, the Della Rovere of Urbino, the Borgia of Romagna, the Farnese of Parma, form a distinct species of despotisms; but all these are of a comparatively late origin. Until the Papacies of Sixtus IV. and Innocent VIII. the Popes had not bethought them of providing in this way for their relatives. Also, it may be remarked, there was an essential weakness in these tyrannies. Since they had to be carved out of the States of the Church, the Pope who had established his son, say in Romagna, died before he could see him well confirmed in a province which the next Pope sought to wrest from his hands, in order to bestow it on his own favourite. The fabric of the Church could not long have stood this disgraceful wrangling between Papal families for the dynastic possession of Church property. Luckily for the continuance of the Papacy, the tide of counter-reformation which set in after the sack of Rome and the great Northern Schism, put a stop to nepotism in its most barefaced form.

There remains the *sixth* and last class of despots to be mentioned. This again is large and of the first importance. Citizens of eminence, like the Medici at Florence, the Bentivogli at Bologna, the Baglioni of Perugia, the Vitelli of Città di Castello, the Gambacorti of Pisa, like Pandolfo Petrucci in Siena (1502), Roméo Pepoli, the usurer of Bologna (1323), the plebeian Alticlinio and Agolanti of Padua (1313), Giovanni Vignate, the millionaire of Lodi (1402), acquired more than their due weight in the conduct of affairs, and gradually tended to tyranny. In most of these cases great wealth was the original source of despotic ascendancy. It was not uncommon to buy cities together with their Signory. Thus the Rossi bought Parma for 35,000 florins in 1333; the Appiani sold Pisa; Astorre Manfredi sold Faenza and Imola in 1377. In 1444 Galeazzo Malatesta sold Pesaro to Alessandro Sforza, and Fossombrone to Urbino; in 1461 Cervia was sold to Venice by the same family. Franceschetto Cibo purchased the County of Anguillara. Towns at last came to have their market value. It was known that Bologna was worth 200,000 florins, Parma 60,000, Arezzo 40,000, Lucca 30,000, and so forth. But personal qualities and nobility of blood might also produce Despots of the sixth class. Thus the Benti-

<sup>7</sup> John Hawkwood (died 1393), the English adventurer, held Cotignola and Bagnacavallo from Gregory XI. In the second half of the fifteenth century the efforts of the Condottieri to erect tyrannies were most frequent. Braccio da Montone established himself in Perugia in 1416, and aspired, not without good grounds for hope, to acquiring the kingdom of Italy. Francesco Sforza, before gaining Milan, had begun to form a despotism at Ancona. Sforza's rival, Giacomo Piccinino, would probably have succeeded in his own attempt, had not Ferdinand of Aragon treacherously murdered him at Naples in 1465. In the disorganization caused by Charles VIII., Vidovero of Brescia in 1495 established himself at Cesena and Castelnovo, and had to be assassinated by Pandolfo Malatesta at the instigation of Venice. After the death of Gian Galeazzo Visconti, in 1402, the generals whom he had employed in the consolidation of his vast dominions attempted to divide the spoil among themselves. Naples, Venice, Milan, Rome, and Florence were in course of time made keenly alive to the risk of suffering a captain of adventure to run his course unchecked.



vogli claimed descent from a bastard of King Enzo, son of Frederick II., who was for a long time an honourable prisoner in Bologna. The Baglioni, after a protracted struggle with the rival family of Oddi, owed their supremacy to ability and vigour in the last years of the fifteenth century. But the neighbourhood of the Papal power, and their own internal dissensions, rendered the hold of this family upon Perugia precarious. As in the case of the Medici and the Bentivogli, many generations might elapse before such burgher families assumed dynastic authority. But to this end they were always advancing.

The history of the bourgeois Despots proves that Italy in the fifteenth century was undergoing a natural process of determination toward tyranny. Sismondi may attempt to demonstrate that Italy was 'not answerable for the crimes with which she was sullied by her tyrants.' But the facts show that she was answerable for choosing Despots instead of remaining free, or rather that she instinctively obeyed a law of social evolution by which princes had to be substituted for municipalities at the end of those fierce internal conflicts and exhausting wars of jealousy which closed the Middle Ages. Machiavelli, with all his love of liberty, is forced to admit that in his day the most powerful provinces of Italy had become incapable of freedom. 'No accident, however weighty and violent, could ever restore Milan or Naples to liberty, owing to their utter corruption. This is clear from the fact that after the death of Filippo Visconti, when Milan tried to regain freedom, she was unable to preserve it.'<sup>8</sup> Whether Machiavelli is right in referring this incapacity for self-government to the corruption of morals and religion may be questioned. But it is certain that throughout the states of Italy, with the one exception of Venice, causes were at work inimical to republics and favourable to despotisms.

It will be observed in this classification of Italian tyrants that the tenure of their power was almost uniformly forcible. They generally acquired it through the people in the first instance, and maintained it by the exercise of violence. Rank had nothing to do with their claims. The bastards of Popes, who like Sixtus IV. had no pedigree, merchants like the Medici, the son of a peasant like Francesco Sforza, a rich usurer like Pepoli, had almost equal chances with nobles of the ancient houses of Este, Visconti, or Malatesta. The chief point in favour of the latter was the familiarity which through long years of authority had accustomed the people to their rule. When exiled, they had a better chance of return to power than parvenus, whose party-cry and ensigns were comparatively fresh and stirred no sentiment of loyalty—if indeed the word loyalty can be applied to that preference for the

<sup>8</sup> *Discorsi*, i. 17. The Florentine philosopher remarks in the same passage, 'Cities, once corrupt, and accustomed to the rule of a prince, can never acquire their freedom even though the prince with all his kith and kin be extirpated. One prince is needed to extinguish another; and the city has no rest except by the creation of a new lord, unless one burgher by his goodness and his great qualities may chance to preserve its independence during his lifetime.'



established and the customary which made the mob, distracted by the wrangling of doctrinaires and intriguers, welcome back a Bentivoglio or a Malatesta. Despotism in Italy as in ancient Greece was democratic. It recruited its ranks from all classes and erected its thrones upon the sovereignty of the peoples it oppressed. The impulse to the free play of ambitious individuality which this state of things communicated was enormous. Capacity might raise the meanest monk to the chair of S. Peter's, the meanest soldier to the duchy of Milan. Audacity, vigour, unscrupulous crime were the chief requisites for success. It was not till Cesare Borgia displayed his magnificence at the French Court, till the Italian adventurer matched himself with royalty in its legitimate splendour, that the lowness of his origin and the frivolity of his pretensions appeared in any glaring light.<sup>9</sup> In Italy itself, where there existed no time-honoured hierarchy of classes and no fountain of nobility in the person of a sovereign, one man was a match for another, provided he knew how to assert himself. To the conditions of a society based on these principles we may ascribe the unrivalled emergence of great personalities among the tyrants, as well as the extraordinary tenacity and vigour of such races as the Visconti. In the contest for power and in the maintenance of an illegal authority, the picked athletes came to the front. The struggle by which they established their tyranny, the efforts by which they defended it against foreign foes and domestic adversaries, trained them to endurance and to daring. They lived habitually in an atmosphere of peril which taxed all their energies. Their activity was extreme, and their passions corresponded to their vehement vitality. About such men there could be nothing on a small or mediocre scale. When a weakling was born in a despotic family, his brothers murdered him, or he was deposed by a watchful rival. Thus only gladiators of tried capacity and iron nerve, superior to religious and moral scruples, dead to national affection, perfected in perfidy, scientific in the use of cruelty and terror, employing first-rate faculties of brain and will and bodily powers in the service of transcendent egotism, only the *virtuosi* of political craft as theorised by Machiavelli, could survive and hold their own upon this perilous arena.

The life of the Despot was usually one of prolonged terror. Immured in strong places on high rocks, or confined to gloomy fortresses like the Milanese Castello, he surrounded his person with foreign troops, protected his bedchamber with a picked guard, and watched his meat and drink lest they should be poisoned. His chief associates were artists, men of letters, astrologers, buffoons, and exiles. He had no real friends or equals, and against his own family he adopted an attitude of fierce suspicion, justified by the frequent intrigues to which

<sup>9</sup> Brantôme, *Capitaines Etrangers*, Discours 48, gives an account of the entrance of the Borgia into Chinon in 1498, and adds: 'The king being at the window saw him arrive, and there can be no doubt how he and his courtiers ridiculed all this state, as unbecoming the petty Duke of Valentinois.'

he was exposed.<sup>10</sup> His timidity verged on monomania. Like Alfonso II. of Naples, he was tortured with the ghosts of starved or strangled victims; like Ezzelino, he felt the mysterious fascination of astrology; like Filippo Maria Visconti, he trembled at the sound of thunder, and set one band of body-guards to watch another next his person. He dared not hope for a quiet end. No one believed in the natural death of a prince: princes must be poisoned or poignarded.<sup>11</sup> Out of thirteen of the Carrara family, in little more than a century (1318-1435) three were deposed or murdered by near relatives, one was expelled by a rival from his state, four were executed by the Venetians. Out of five of the La Scala family three were killed by their brothers, and a fourth was poisoned in exile.

To enumerate all the catastrophies of reigning families occurring in the fifteenth century alone, would be quite impossible within the limits of this chapter. Yet it is only by dwelling on the more important that any adequate notion of the perils of Italian despotism can be formed. Thus Girolamo Riario was murdered by his subjects at Forlì (1488), and Francesco Vico dei Prefetti in the Church of S. Sisto at Viterbo<sup>12</sup> (1387). At Lodi in 1402 Antonio Fisiraga burned the chief members of the ruling house of Vistarini on the public square, and died himself of poison after a few months. His successor in the tyranny, Giovanni Vignate, was imprisoned by Filippo Maria Visconti in a wooden cage at Pava, and beat his brains out in despair against its bars. At the same epoch Gabrino Fondulo slaughtered seventy of the Cavalcabò family together in his castle of Macastormo, with the purpose of acquiring their tyranny over Cremona. He was afterwards beheaded as a traitor at Milan (1425). Ottobon Terzi was assassinated

<sup>10</sup> See what Guicciardini in his *History of Florence* says about the suspicious temper of even such a tyrant as the cultivated and philosophical Lorenzo de' Medici. See too the incomparably eloquent and penetrating allegory of *Sospetto*, and its application to the tyrants of Italy in Ariosto's *Cinque Canti* (C. 2. St. 1-9).

<sup>11</sup> Our dramatist Webster, whose genius was fascinated by the crimes of Italian despotism, makes the Duke of Bracciano exclaim on his deathbed:—

'O thou soft natural death, thou art joint-twin  
To sweetest Slumber! no rough-bearded comet  
Stares on thy mild departure; the dull owl  
Beats not against thy casement; the hoarse wolf  
Scents not thy carrion: pity winds thy corse,  
Whilst horror waits on princes.'

Instances of domestic crime might be multiplied by the hundred. Besides those which will follow in these pages, it is enough to notice the murder of Giovanni Francesco Pico, by his nephew, at Mirandola (1533); the murder of his uncle by Oliverotto da Fermo; the assassination of Giovanni Varano by his brothers at Camerino (1434); Ostasio da Polenta's fratricide (1322); Obizzo da Polenta's fratricide in the next generation, and the murder of Ugo Gonzaga by his brothers; Gian Francesco Gonzaga's murder of his wife; the poisoning of Francesco Sforza's first wife, Polissena, Countess of Montalto, with her little girl, by her aunt; and the murder of Galeotto Manfredi, by his wife, at Faenza (1488).

<sup>12</sup> The family of the Prefetti fed up the murderer in their castle, and then gave him alive to be eaten by their hounds.

at Parma (1408), Nicolà Borghese at Siena (1499), Altobello Dattiri at Todi (about 1500), Raimondo and Pandolfo Malatesta at Rimini, and Oddo Antonio di Montefeltro at Urbino (1444).<sup>13</sup> The Varani were massacred to a man in the church of S. Dominic at Camerino (1434). the Trinci at Foligno (1434), and the Chiavelli of Fabriano in church upon Ascension Day (1435). This wholesale extirpation of three reigning families introduces one of the most romantic episodes in the history of Italian despotism. From the slaughter of the Varani one only child, Giulio Cesare, a boy of two years old, was saved by his aunt Tora. She concealed him in a truss of hay and carried him to the Trinci at Foligno. Hardly had she gained this refuge, when the Trinci were destroyed, and she had to fly with her burden to the Chiavelli at Fabriano. There the same scenes of bloodshed awaited her. A third time she took to flight, and now concealed her precious charge in a nunnery. The boy was afterwards stolen from the town on horseback by a soldier of adventure. After surviving three massacres of kith and kin, he returned as despot at the age of twelve to Camerino, and became a general of distinction. But he was not destined to end his life in peace. Cesare Borgia finally murdered him, together with three of his sons, when he had reached the age of sixty. Less romantic but not less significant in the annals of tyranny is the story of the Trinci. A rival noble of Foligno, Pietro Rasiglia, had been injured in his honour by the chief of the ruling house. He contrived to assassinate two brothers, Nicolà and Bartolommeo, in his castle of Nocera; but the third, Corrado Trinci, escaped, and took a fearful vengeance on his enemy. By the help of Braccio da Montone he possessed himself of Nocera and all its inhabitants, with the exception of Pietro Rasiglia's wife, whom her husband flung from the battlements. Corrado then butchered the men, women, and children of the Rasiglia clan, to the number of three hundred persons, accomplishing his vengeance with details of atrocity too infernal to be dwelt on in these pages. It is recorded that thirty-six asses laden with their mangled limbs paraded the streets of Foligno as a terror-striking spectacle for the inhabitants. He then ruled the city by violence, until the warlike Cardinal dei Vitelleschi avenged society of so much mischief by destroying the tyrant and five of his sons, in the same year. Equally fantastic are the annals of the great house of the Baglioni at Perugia. Raised in 1389 upon the ruins of the bourgeois faction called Raspanti, they founded their tyranny in the person of Pandolfo Baglioni, who was murdered together with sixty of his clan and followers by the party they had dispossessed. The new Despot, Biordo Michelotti, was stabbed in the shoulders with a poisoned dagger by his relative, the

<sup>13</sup> Sforza Attendolo killed Terzi by a spear-thrust in the back. Pandolfo Petrucci murdered Borghese, who was his father-in-law. Raimondo Malatesta was stabbed by his two nephews disguised as hermits. Dattiri was bound naked to a plank and killed piecemeal by the people, who bit his flesh, cut slices out, and sold and ate it—distributing his living body as a sort of infernal sacrament among themselves.

abbot of S. Pietro. Then the city, in 1416, submitted to Braccio la Montone, who raised it to unprecedented power and glory. On his death it fell back into new discords, from which it was rescued again by the Baglioni in 1466, now finally successful in their prolonged warfare with the rival family of Oddi. But they did not hold their despotism in tranquillity. In 1500 one of the members of the house, Grifonetto degli Baglioni, conspired against his kinsmen and slew them in their palaces at night. As told by Matarazzo, this tragedy offers an epitome of all that is most brilliant and terrible in the domestic feuds of the Italian tyrants.<sup>14</sup> The vicissitudes of the Bentivogli at Bologna present another series of catastrophes, due less to their personal crimes than to the fury of the civil strife that raged around them. Giovanni Bentivoglio began the dynasty in 1400. The next year he was stabbed to death and pounded in a wine-vat by the infuriated populace, who thought he had betrayed their interests in battle. His son Antonio was beheaded by a Papal Legate, and numerous members of the family on their return from exile suffered the same fate. In course of time the Bentivogli made themselves adored by the people; and when Piccinino imprisoned the heir of their house, Annibale, in the castle of Varano, four youths of the Marescotti family undertook his rescue at the peril of their lives, and raised him to the Signory of Bologna. In 1445 the Canetoli, powerful nobles, who hated the popular dynasty, invited Annibale and all his clan to a christening feast, where they exterminated every member of the reigning house. Not one Bentivoglio was left alive. In revenge for this massacre, the Marescotti, aided by the populace, hunted down the Canetoli for three whole days in Bologna, and nailed their smoking hearts to the doors of the Bentivoglio palace. They then drew from his obscurity in Florence the bastard Santi Bentivoglio, who found himself suddenly lifted from a wool-factory to a throne. Whether he was a genuine Bentivoglio or not, mattered little. The house had become necessary to Bologna, and its popularity had been baptized in the bloodshed of four massacres. What remains of its story can be briefly told. When Cesare Borgia besieged Bologna, the Marescotti intrigued with him, and eight of their number were sacrificed by the Bentivogli in spite of their old services to the dynasty. The survivors, by the help of Julius II., returned from exile in 1536, to witness the final banishment of the Bentivogli and to take part in the destruction of the palace, where their ancestors had nailed the hearts of the Canetoli upon the walls.

To multiply the records of crime revenged by crime, of force repelled by violence, of treason heaped on treachery, of insult repaid by fraud, would be easy enough. Indeed, a huge book might be compiled containing nothing but the episodes in this grim history of despotism, now tragic and pathetic, now terror-moving in sublimity of passion, now despicable by the baseness of the motives brought to light, at one time

<sup>14</sup> See the article 'Perugia' in my *Sketches in Italy and Greece*.

revolting through excess of physical horrors, at another fascinating by the spectacle of heroic courage, intelligence, and resolution. Enough, however, has been said to describe the atmosphere of danger in which the tyrants breathed and moved, and from which not one of them was ever capable of finding freedom. Even a princely house so well based in its dynasty and so splendid in its parade of culture as that of the Estensi offers a long list of terrific tragedies. One princess is executed for adultery with her stepson (1425); a bastard's bastard tries to seize the throne, and it put to death with all his kin (1493); a wife is poisoned by her husband to prevent her poisoning him (1493); two brothers cabal against the legitimate heads of the house, and are imprisoned for life (1506). Such was the labyrinth of plot and counterplot, of force repelled by violence, in which the princes praised by Ariosto and by Tasso lived.

Isolated, crime-haunted, and remorseless, at the same time fierce and timorous, the despot not unfrequently made of vice a fine art for his amusement, and openly defied humanity. His pleasures tended to extravagance. Inordinate lust and refined cruelty sated his irritable and jaded appetites. He destroyed pity in his soul, and fed his dogs with living men, or spent his brains upon the invention of new tortures. From the game of politics again he won a feverish pleasure, playing for states and cities as a man plays chess, and endeavouring to extract the utmost excitement from the varying turns of skill and chance. It would be an exaggeration to assert that all the princes of Italy were of this sort. The saner, better, and nobler among them—men of the stamp of Gian Galeazzo Visconti, Can Grande della Scala, Francesco and Lodovico Sforza, found a more humane enjoyment in the consolidation of their empire, the cementing their alliances, the society of learned men, the friendship of great artists, the foundation of libraries, the building of palaces and churches, the execution of vast schemes of conquest. Others, like Galeazzo Visconti, indulged a comparatively innocent taste for magnificence. Some, like Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta, combined the vices of a barbarian with the enthusiasm of a scholar. Others again, like Lorenzo de' Medici and Frederick of Urbino, exhibited the model of moderation in statecraft and a noble width of culture. But the tendency to degenerate was fatal in all the despotic houses. The strain of tyranny proved too strong. Crime, illegality, and the sense of peril, descending from father to son, produced monsters in the shape of men. The last Visconti, the last La Scalas, the last Sforzas, the last Malatestas, the last Farnesi, the last Medici are among the worst specimens of human nature.

Macaulay's brilliant description of the Italian tyrant in his essay on Machiavelli deserves careful study. It may, however, be remarked that the picture is too favourable. Macaulay omits the darker crimes of the Despots, and draws his portrait almost exclusively from such men as Gian Galeazzo Visconti, Francesco and Lodovico Sforza, Frederick of Urbino, and Lorenzo de' Medici. The point he is seeking to

establish—that political immorality in Italy was the national correlative to Northern brutality—leads him to idealise the polite refinement, the disciplined passions, the firm and astute policy, the power over men, and the excellent government which distinguished the noblest Italian princes. When he says, 'Wanton cruelty was not in his nature: on the contrary, where no political object was at stake, his disposition was soft and humane;' he seems to have forgotten Gian Maria Visconti, Corrado Trinci, Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta, and Cesare Borgia. When he writes, 'His passions, like well-trained troops, are impetuous by rule, and in their most headstrong fury never forget the discipline to which they have been accustomed,' he leaves Francesco Maria della Rovere, Galeazzo Maria Sforza, Pier Luigi Farnese, Alexander VI., out of the reckoning. If all the Despots had been what Macaulay describes, the revolutions and conspiracies of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries would not have taken place. It is, however, to be remarked that in the sixteenth century the conduct of the tyrant toward his subjects assumed an external form of mildness. As Italy mixed with the European nations, and as tyranny came to be legalised in the Italian states, the Despots developed a policy not of terrorism but of enervation (Lorenzo de' Medici is the great example), and aspired to be paternal governors.

What I have said about Italian despotism is no mere fancy picture. The actual details of Milanese history, the innumerable tragedies of Lombardy, Romagna, and the Marches of Ancona, during the ascendancy of despotic families, are far more terrible than any fiction; nor would it be easy for the imagination to invent so perplexing a mixture of savage barbarism with modern refinement. Savonarola's denunciations<sup>15</sup> and Villani's descriptions of a Despot read like passages from Plato's Republic, like the most pregnant of Aristotle's criticisms upon tyranny. The prologue to the sixth book of Matteo Villani's Chronicle may be cited as a fair specimen of the judgment passed by contemporary Italian thinkers upon their princes (Libro Sesto, cap. i.): 'The crimes of Despots always hinder and often neutralise the virtues of good men. Their pleasures are at variance with morality. By them the riches of their subjects are swallowed up. They are foes to men who grow in wisdom and in greatness of soul in their dominions. They diminish by their imposts the wealth of the peoples ruled by them. Their unbridled lust is never satiated, but their subjects have to suffer such outrages and insults as their fancy may from time to time suggest. But inasmuch as the violence of tyranny is manifested to all eyes by these and many other atrocities, we need not enumerate them afresh. It is enough to select one feature, strange in appearance but familiar in fact; for what can be more extraordinary than to see princes

<sup>15</sup> See the passage condensed from his Sermons in Villari's Life of Savonarola (Eng. Tr. vol. ii. p. 62). The most thoroughgoing analysis of despotic criminality is contained in Savonarola's *Trattato circa el Reggimento e Governo della Città di Firenze*, trattato ii. cap. 2. *Della Malitia e pessime Condizioni del Tyranno*.

of ancient and illustrious lineage bowing to the service of Despots, men of high descent and time-honoured nobility frequenting their tables and accepting their bounties? Yet if we consider the end of all this, the glory of tyrants often turns to misery and ruin. Who can exaggerate their wretchedness? They know not where to place their confidence; and their courtiers are always on the look-out for the Despot's fall, gladly lending their influence and best endeavours to undo him in spite of previous servility. This does not happen to hereditary kings, because their conduct toward their subjects, as well as their good qualities and all their circumstances, are of a nature contrary to that of tyrants. Therefore the very causes which produce and fortify and augment tyrannies, conceal and nourish in themselves the sources of their overthrow and ruin. This indeed is the greatest wretchedness of tyrants.<sup>7</sup>

It may be objected that this sweeping criticism, from the pen of a Florentine citizen at war with Milan, partakes of the nature of an invective. Yet abundant proofs can be furnished from the chronicles of burghs which owed material splendour to their despots, confirming the censure of Villani. Matarazzo, for example, whose sympathy with the house of Baglioni is so striking, and who exults in the distinction they conferred upon Perugia, writes no less bitterly concerning the pernicious effects of their misgovernment.<sup>16</sup> It is to be noticed that Villani and Matarazzo agree about the special evils brought upon the populations by their tyrants. Lust and violence take the first place. Next comes extortion; then the protection of the lawless and the criminal against the better sort of citizens. But the Florentine, with intellectual acumen, lays his finger on one of the chief vices of their rule. They retard the development of mental greatness in their states, and check the growth of men of genius. Ariosto, in the comparative calm of the sixteenth century, when tyrannies had yielded to the protectorate of Spain, sums up the records of the past in the following memorable passage:<sup>17</sup> 'Happy the kingdoms where an open-hearted and blameless man gives law! Wretched indeed and pitiable are those where injustice and cruelty hold sway, where burdens ever greater and more grievous are laid upon the people by tyrants like those who now abound in Italy, whose infamy will be recorded through years to come as no less black than Caligula's or Nero's.' Guicciardini, with pregnant brevity, observes:<sup>18</sup> 'The mortar with which the states of tyrants are cemented is the blood of the citizens.'

In the history of Italian despotism two points of first-rate importance will demand attention. The first is the process by which the greater tyrannies absorbed the smaller during the fourteenth century. The second is the relation of the chief Condottieri to the tyrants of the fifteenth century. The evolution of these two phenomena cannot be

<sup>16</sup> *Arch. Stor.* xvi. 102. See my *Sketches in Italy and Greece*, p. 84.

<sup>17</sup> *Cinque Canti*, ii. 5.

<sup>18</sup> *Ricordi Politici*, ccxlii.



traced more clearly than by a study of the history of Milan, which at the same time presents a detailed picture of the policy and character of the Italian Despot during this period. The dynasties of Visconti and Sforza from 1300 to 1500 bridged over the years that intervened between the Middle Age and the Renaissance, between the period of the free burghs and the period during which Italy was destined to become the theatre of the action of more powerful nations. Their alliances and diplomatic relations prepared the way for the interference of foreigners in Italian affairs. Their pedigree illustrates the power acquired by military adventurers in the peninsula. The magnitude of their political schemes displays the most soaring ambition which it was ever granted to Italian princes to indulge. The splendour of their court and the intelligence of their culture bear witness to the high state of civilisation which the Italians had reached.

The power of the Visconti in Milan was founded upon that of the Della Torre family, who preceded them as Captains-General of the people at the end of the thirteenth century. Otho, Archbishop of Milan, first laid a substantial basis for the dominion of his house by imprisoning Napoleone Della Torre and five of his relatives in three iron cages in 1277, and by causing his nephew Matteo Visconti to be nominated both by the Emperor and by the people of Milan as Imperial Vicar. Matteo, who headed the Ghibelline party in Lombardy, was the model of a prudent Italian Despot. From the date 1311, when he finally succeeded in his attempts upon the sovereignty of Milan, to 1322, when he abdicated in favour of his son Galeazzo, he ruled his states by force of character, craft, and insight, more than by violence or cruelty. Excellent as a general, he was still better as a diplomatist, winning more cities by money than by the sword. All through his life, as became a Ghibelline chief at that time, he persisted in fierce enmity against the Church. But just before his death a change came over him. He showed signs of superstitious terror, and began to fear the ban of excommunication, which lay upon him. This weakness alarmed the suspicions of his sons, terrible and wolf-like men, whom Matteo had hitherto controlled with bit and bridle. They therefore induced him to abdicate in 1322, and when in the same year he died, they buried his body in a secret place, lest it should be exhumed and scattered to the winds in accordance with the Papal edict against him.<sup>19</sup> Galeazzo, his son, was less fortunate than Matteo, surnamed *Il Grande* by the Lombards. The Emperor Louis of Bavaria threw him into prison on the occasion of his visit to Milan in 1327, and only

<sup>19</sup> We may compare what Dante puts into the mouth of Manfred in the 'Purgatory' (canto iii.). The great Ghibelline poet here protests against the use of excommunication as a political weapon. His sense of justice will not allow him to believe that God can regard the sentence of priests and pontiffs, actuated by the spite of partisans: yet the examples of Frederick II. and of this Matteo Visconti prove how terrifying, even to the boldest, those sentences continued to be. Few had the resolute will of Galeazzo Pico di Mirandola, who expired in 1499 under the ban of the Church, which he had borne for sixteen years.



released him at the intercession of his friend Castruccio Castracane. To such an extent was the growing tyranny of the Visconti still dependent upon their office delegated from the Empire. This Galeazzo married Beatrice d' Este, the widow of Nino di Gallura, of whom Dante speaks in the eighth canto of the 'Purgatory,' and had by her a son named Azzo. Azzo bought the city, together with the title of Imperial Vicar, from the same Louis who had imprisoned his father.<sup>20</sup> When he was thus seated in the tyranny of his grandfather, he proceeded to fortify it further by the addition of ten Lombard towns, which he reduced beneath the supremacy of Milan. At the same time he consolidated his own power by the murder of his uncle Marco in 1329, who had grown too mighty as a general. Giovio describes him as fair of complexion, blue-eyed, curly-haired, and subject to the hereditary disease of gout.<sup>21</sup> Azzo died in 1339, and was succeeded by his uncle Lucchino. In Lucchino the darker side of the Visconti character appears for the first time. Cruel, moody, and jealous, he passed his life in perpetual terror. His nephews, Galeazzo and Barnabas, conspired against him, and were exiled to Flanders. His wife, Isabella Fieschi, intrigued with Galeazzo and disgraced him by her amours with Ugolino Gonzaga and Dandolo the Doge of Venice. Finally suspicion rose to such a pitch between this ill-assorted couple, that, while Lucchino was plotting how to murder Isabella, she succeeded in poisoning him in 1349. In spite of these domestic calamities, Lucchino was potent as a general and governor. He bought Parma from Obizzo d' Este, and made the town of Pisa dependent upon Milan. Already in his policy we can trace the encroachment which characterised the schemes of the Milanese Despots, who were always plotting to advance their foot beyond the Apennines as a prelude to the complete subjugation of Italy. Lucchino left sons, but none of proved legitimacy.<sup>22</sup> Consequently he was succeeded by his brother Giovanni, son of old Matteo il Grande, and Archbishop of Milan. This man, the friend of Petrarch, was one of the most notable characters of the fourteenth century. Finding himself at the head of sixteen cities, he added Bologna to the tyranny of the Visconti in 1350, and made himself strong enough to defy the Pope. Clement VI., resenting his encroachments on the Papal territory, summoned him to Avignon. Giovanni Visconti replied

<sup>20</sup> This was in 1328. Azzo agreed to pay 25,000 florins. The vast wealth of the Visconti amassed during their years of peaceful occupation always stood them in good stead when bad times came, and when the Emperor was short of cash. Azzo deserves special commendation from the student of art for the exquisite octagonal tower of S. Gottardo, which he built of terra cotta with marble pilasters, in Milan. It is quite one of the loveliest monuments of mediæval Italian architecture.

<sup>21</sup> Lucchino and Galeazzo Visconti were both afflicted with gout, the latter to such an extent as to be almost crippled.

<sup>22</sup> This would not have been by itself a bar to succession in an Italian tyranny. But Lucchino's bastards were not of the proper stuff to continue their father's government, while their fiery uncle was precisely the man to sustain the honour and extend the power of the Visconti.

that he would march thither at the head of 12,000 cavalry and 6,000 infantry. In the Duomo of Milan he ascended his throne with the crosier in his left hand and a drawn sword in his right; and thus he is always represented in pictures. The story of Giovanni's answer to the Papal Legate is well told by Corio:<sup>23</sup> 'After Mass in the Cathedral the great-hearted Archbishop unsheathed a flashing sword, which he had girded on his thigh, and with his left hand seized the cross, saying, "This is my spiritual sceptre and I will wield the sword as my temporal, in defence of all my empire."' Afterwards he sent couriers to engage lodgings for his soldiers and his train for six months. Visitors to Avignon found no room in the city, and the Pope was fain to decline so terrible a guest. In 1353 Giovanni annexed Genoa to the Milanese principality, and died in 1354, having established the rule of the Visconti over the whole of the North of Italy, with the exception of Piedmont, Verona, Mantua, Ferrara, and Venice.

The reign of the Archbishop Giovanni marks a new epoch in the despotism of the Visconti. They are now no longer the successful rivals of the Della Torre family or dependants on imperial caprice, but self-made sovereigns, with a well-established power in Milan and a wide extent of subject territory. Their dynasty, though based on force and maintained by violence, has come to be acknowledged; and we shall soon see them allying themselves with the royal houses of Europe. After the death of Giovanni, Matteo's sons were extinct. But Stefano, the last of his family, had left three children, who now succeeded to the lands and cities of the house. They were named Matteo, Bernabo, and Galeazzo. Between these three princes of partition of the heritage of Giovanni Visconti was effected. Matteo took Bologna, Lodi, Piacenza, Parma, Bobbio, and some other towns of less importance. Bernabo received Cremona, Crema, Brescia, and Bergamo. Galeazzo held Como, Novara, Vercelli, Asti, Tortona, and Alessandria. Milan and Genoa were to be ruled by the three in common. It may here be noticed that the dismemberment of Italian despotisms among joint-heirs was a not unfrequent source of disturbance and a cause of weakness to their dynasties. At the same time the practice followed naturally upon the illegal nature of the tyrant's title. He dealt with his cities as so many pieces of personal property, which he could distribute as he chose, not as a coherent whole to be bequeathed to one ruler for the common benefit of all his subjects. In consequence of such partition, it became the interest of brother to murder brother, so as to effect a reconsolidation of the family estates. Something of the sort happened on this occasion. Matteo abandoned himself to bestial sensuality; and his two brothers, finding him both feeble and likely to bring discredit on their rule, caused him to be assassinated in 1355.<sup>24</sup> They then jointly swayed the Milanese, with unanimity remarkable in despots.

<sup>23</sup> *Storia di Milano*, 1554, p. 223.

<sup>24</sup> M. Villani, v. 81. Compare Corio, p. 230. Corio gives the date 1356.

Galeazzo was distinguished as the handsomest man of his age. He was tall and graceful, with golden hair, which he wore in long plaits, or tied up in a net, or else loose and crowned with flowers. Fond of display and magnificence, he spent much of his vast wealth in shows and festivals, and in the building of palaces and churches. The same taste for splendour led him to seek royal marriages for his children. His daughter Violante was wedded to the Duke of Clarence, son of Edward III. of England, who received with her for dowry the sum of 200,000 golden florins, as well as five cities bordering on Piedmont.<sup>25</sup> It must have been a strange experience for this brother of the Black Prince, leaving London, where the streets were still unpaved, the houses thatched, the beds laid on straw, and where wine was sold as medicine, to pass into the luxurious palaces of Lombardy, walled with marble, and raised high above smooth streets of stone. Of this marriage with Violante, Giovio gives some curious details. He says that Galeazzo on this occasion made splendid presents to more than 200 Englishmen, so that he was reckoned to have outdone the greatest kings in generosity. At the banquet Gian Galeazzo, the bride's brother, leading a choice company of well-born youths, brought to the table with each course fresh gifts.<sup>26</sup> 'At one time it was a matter of sixty most beautiful horses with trappings of silk and silver; at another, plate, hawks, hounds, horse-gear, fine cuirasses, suits of armour fashioned of wrought steel, helmets adorned with crests, surcoats embroidered with pearls, belts, precious jewels set in gold, and great quantities of cloth of gold and crimson stuff for making raiment. Such was the profusion of this banquet that the remnants taken from the table were enough and to spare for 10,000 men.' Petrarch, we may remember, assisted at this festival and sat among the princes. It was thus that Galeazzo displayed his wealth before the feudal nobles of the North, and at the same time stretched the hand of friendly patronage to the greatest literary man of Europe. Meanwhile he also married his son Gian Galeazzo to Isabella, daughter of King John of France, spending on this occasion, it is said, a similar sum of money for the honour of a royal alliance.<sup>27</sup>

Galeazzo held his court at Pavia. His brother reigned at Milan. Bernabo displayed all the worst vices of the Visconti. His system of taxation was most oppressive, and at the same time so lucrative that he was able, according to Giovio's estimate, to settle nine of his daughters at the expense of something like two millions of gold pieces. A curious instance of his tyranny relates to his hunting establishment. Having saddled his subjects with the keep of 5,000 boarhounds, he appointed officers to go round and see whether these brutes were either too lean or too well-fed to be in good condition for the chase. If anything ap-

<sup>25</sup> Namely, Alba, Cuneo, Carastrea, Mondovico, Braida. See Corio, p. 238, who adds sentimentally, 'il che quasi fu l'ultima rovina del suo stato.'

<sup>26</sup> Corio (pp. 239, 240) gives the bill of fare of the banquet.

<sup>27</sup> Sismondi says he gave 600,000 florins to Charles, the brother of Isabella, but authorities differ about the actual amount.

peared defective in their management, the peasants on whom they were quartered had to suffer in their persons and their property.<sup>28</sup> This Bernabo was also remarkable for his cold-blooded cruelty. Together with his brother, he devised and caused to be publicly announced by edict that State criminals would be subjected to a series of tortures extending over the space of forty days. In this infernal programme every variety of torment found a place, and days of respite were so calculated as to prolong the lives of the victims for further suffering, till at last there was little left of them that had not been hacked and hewed and flayed away.<sup>29</sup> To such extremities of terrorism were the Despots driven in the maintenance of their illegal power.

Galeazzo died in 1378, and was succeeded in his own portion of the Visconti domain by his son Gian Galeazzo. Now began one of those long, slow, internecine struggles which were so common between the members of the ruling families in Italy. Bernabo and his sons schemed to get possession of the young prince's estate. He, on the other hand, determined to supplant his uncle, and to reunite the whole Visconti principality beneath his own sway. Craft was the weapon which he chose in this encounter. Shutting himself up in Pavia, he made no disguise of his physical cowardice, which was real, while he simulated a timidity of spirit wholly alien to his temperament. He pretended to be absorbed in religious observances, and gradually induced his uncle and cousins to despise him as a poor creature whom they could make short work of when occasion served. In 1385, having thus prepared the way for treason, he avowed his intention of proceeding on a pilgrimage to Our Lady of Varese. Starting from Pavia with a body-guard of Germans, he passed near Milan, where his uncle and cousins came forth to meet him. Gian Galeazzo feigned a courteous greeting; but when he saw his relatives within his grasp, he gave a watchword in German to his troops, who surrounded Bernabo and took him prisoner with his sons. Gian Galeazzo marched immediately into Milan, poisoned his uncle in a dungeon, and proclaimed himself sole lord of the Visconti heirship.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup> 'Per cagione di questa caccia continoamente teneva cinque mila cani, e la maggior parte di quelle distribuiva alla custodia de i cittadini, e anche a i contadini, i quali niun altro cane che quelli potevano tenere. Questi due volte il mese erano tenuti a far la mostra. Onde trovandoli macri in gran somma di danari erano condannati, e se grossi erano, incolpandoli del troppo, erano multati; se morivano, li pigliava il tutto.'—Corio, p. 247.

Read M. Villani, vii. 48, for the story of a peasant who was given to Bernabo's dogs to be devoured for having killed a hare. Corio (p. 247) describes the punishments which he inflicted on his subjects who were convicted of poaching—eyes put out, houses burned, &c. A young man who dreamed of killing a boar had an eye put out and a hand cut off because he imprudently recounted his vision of sport in sleep. On one occasion he burned two friars who ventured to remonstrate. We may compare Pontanus, *De Immanitate*, vol. i. pp. 318, 320, for similar cruelty in Ferdinand, King of Naples.

<sup>29</sup> This programme may be read in Sismondi, iv. 282.

<sup>30</sup> The narrative of this coup-de-main may be read with advantage in Corio, p. 258.

The reign of Gian Galeazzo, which began with this coup-de-main (1385-1402), forms a very important chapter in Italian history. We may first see what sort of man he was, and then proceed to trace his aims and achievements. Giovio describes him as having been a remarkably sedate and thoughtful boy, so wise beyond his years that his friends feared he would not grow to man's estate. No pleasures in after-life drew him away from business. Hunting, hawking, women, had alike no charms for him. He took moderate exercise for the preservation of his health, read and meditated much, and relaxed himself in conversation with men of letters. Pure intellect, in fact, had reached to perfect independence in this prince, who was far above the boisterous pleasures and violent activities of the age in which he lived. In the erection of public buildings he was magnificent. The Certosa of Pavia and the Duomo of Milan owed their foundation to his sense of splendour. At the same time he completed the palace of Pavia, which his father had begun, and which he made the noblest dwelling-house in Europe. The University of Pavia was raised by him from a state of decadence to one of great prosperity, partly by munificent endowments and partly by a wise choice of professors. In his military undertakings he displayed a kindred taste for vast engineering projects. He contemplated and partly carried out a scheme for turning the Mincio and the Brenta from their channels, and for drying up the lagoons of Venice. In this way he purposed to attack his last great enemy, the Republic of S. Mark, upon her strongest point. Yet in the midst of these huge designs he was able to attend to the most trifling details of economy. His love of order was so precise that he may be said to have applied the method of a banker's office to the conduct of a state. It was he who invented Bureaucracy by creating a special class of paid clerks and secretaries of departments. Their duty consisted in committing to books and ledgers the minutest items of his private expenditure and the outgoings of his public purse; in noting the details of the several taxes, so as to be able to present a survey of the whole state revenue; and in recording the names and qualities and claims of his generals, captains, and officials. A separate office was devoted to his correspondence, of all of which he kept accurate copies.<sup>31</sup> By applying this mercantile machinery to the management of his vast dominions, at a time when public economy was but little understood in Europe, Gian Galeazzo raised his wealth enormously above that of his neighbours. His income in a single year is said to have amounted to 1,200,000 golden florins, with the addition of 800,000 golden florins levied by

<sup>31</sup> Giovio is particular upon these points: 'Ho veduto io ne gli armari de' suoi Archivi meravigliosi libri in carta pecora, i quali contenevano d' anno in anno i nomi de' capitani, condottieri, e soldati vecchi, e le paghe di ogn' uno, e 'l rotulo delle cavalerie et delle fanterie: v' erano anco registrate le copie delle lettere le quali negli importantissimi maneggi di far guerra o pace, o egli haveva scritto ai principi o haveva ricevuto da loro.'

extraordinary calls.<sup>32</sup> The personal timidity of this formidable prince prevented him from leading his armies in the field. He therefore found it necessary to employ paid generals, and took into his service all the chief Condottieri of the day, thus giving an impulse to the custom which was destined to corrupt the whole military system of Italy. Of these men, whom he well knew how to choose, he was himself the brain and moving principle. He might have boasted that he never took a step without calculating the cost, carefully considering the object, and proportioning the means to his end. How mad to such a man must have seemed the Crusaders of previous centuries, or the chivalrous Princes of Northern Germany and Burgundy, who expanded their force upon such unprofitable and impossible undertakings as the subjugation, for instance, of Switzerland! Not a single trait in his character reminds us of the Middle Ages, unless it be that he was said to care for reliques with a superstitious passion worthy of Louis XI. Sismondi sums up the description of this extraordinary Despot in the following sentences, which may be quoted for their graphic brevity: 'False and pitiless, he joined to immeasurable ambition a genius for enterprise, and to immovable constancy a personal timidity which he did not endeavour to conceal. The least unexpected motion near him threw him into a paroxysm of nervous terror. No prince employed so many soldiers to guard his palace, or took such multiplied precautions of distrust. He seemed to acknowledge himself the enemy of the whole world. But the vices of tyranny had not weakened his ability. He employed his immense wealth without prodigality; his finances were always flourishing; his cities well garrisoned and victualled; his army well paid; all the captains of adventure scattered throughout Italy received pensions from him, and were ready to return to his service whenever called upon. He encouraged the warriors of the new Italian school; he knew well how to distinguish, reward, and win their attachment.'<sup>33</sup> Such was the tyrant who aimed at nothing less than the reduction of the whole of Italy beneath the sway of the Visconti, and who might have achieved his purpose had not his career of conquest been checked by the Republic of Florence, and afterwards cut short by a premature death.

At the time of his accession the Visconti had already rooted out the Correggi and Rossi of Parma, the Scotti of Piacenza, the Pelavicini of San Donnino, the Tornielli of Novara, the Ponzoni and Cavalcabò of Cremona, the Beccaria and Languschi of Pavia, the Fisiraghi of Lodi, the Brusati of Brescia. Their viper had swallowed all these lesser

<sup>32</sup> The description given by Corio (pp. 260, 266-68) of the dower in money, plate, and jewels brought by Valentina Visconti to Louis d'Orléans is a good proof of Gian Galeazzo's wealth. Besides the town of Asti, she took with her in money 400,000 golden florins. Her gems were estimated at 68,858 florins, and her plate at 1,667 marks of Paris. The inventory is curious.

<sup>33</sup> *History of the Italian Republics* (1 vol. Longmans), p. 190.

snakes.<sup>34</sup> But the Carrara family still ruled at Padua, the Gonzaga at Mantua, the Este at Ferrara, while the great house of Scala was in possession of Verona. Gian Galeazzo's schemes were first directed against the Scala dynasty. Founded, like that of the Visconti, upon the imperial authority, it rose to its greatest height under the Ghibelline general Can Grande and his nephew Mastino in the first half of the fourteenth century (1312-51). Mastino had himself cherished the project of an Italian Kingdom; but he died before approaching its accomplishment. The degeneracy of his house began with his three sons. The two younger killed the eldest; of the survivors the stronger slew the weaker and then died in 1374, leaving his domains in two of his bastards. One of these, named Antonio, killed the other in 1381,<sup>35</sup> and afterwards fell a prey to the Visconti in 1387. In his subjugation of Verona Gian Galeazzo contrived to make use of the Carrara family, although these princes were allied by marriage to the Scaligers, and had everything to lose by their downfall. He next proceeded to attack Padua, and gained the co-operation of Venice. In 1388 Francesco da Carrara had to cede his territory to Visconti's generals, who in the same year possessed themselves for him of the Trevisan Marches. It was then that the Venetians saw too late the error they had committed in suffering Verona and Padua to be annexed by the Visconti, when they ought to have been fortified as defences interposed between his growing power and themselves. Having now made himself master of the North of Italy,<sup>36</sup> with the exception of Mantua, Ferrara, and Bologna, Gian Galeazzo turned his attention to these cities. Alberto d' Este was ruling in Ferrara; Francesco da Gonzaga in Mantua. It was the Visconti's policy to enfeeble these two princes by causing them to appear odious in the eyes of their subjects.<sup>37</sup> Accordingly he roused the jealousy of the Marquis of Ferrara against his nephew Obizzo to such a pitch that Alberto beheaded him together with his mother, burned his wife, and hung a third member of his family, besides torturing to death all the supposed accomplices of the unfortunate young man. Against the Marquis of Mantua Gian Galeazzo devised a still more diabolical plot. By forged letters and subtly contrived incidents he caused Francesco

<sup>34</sup> Il Biscione, or the Great Serpent, was the name commonly given to the tyranny of the Visconti (see M. Villani, vi. 8), in allusion to their ensign of a naked child issuing from a snake's mouth.

<sup>35</sup> Corio, p. 255, tells how the murder was accomplished. Antonio tried to make it appear that his brother Bartolommeo had met his death in the prosecution of infamous amours.

<sup>36</sup> Savoy was not in his hands, however, and the Marquisate of Montferrat remained nominally independent, though he held its heir in a kind of honourable confinement. Venice, too, remained in formidable neutrality, the spectator of the Visconti's conquests.

<sup>37</sup> The policy adopted by the Visconti against the Estensi and the Gonzaghi was that recommended by Machiavelli (*Disc.* iii. 32): 'quando alcuno vuole o che un popolo o un principe levi al tutto l' animo ad uno accordo, non ci è altro modo piu vero, nè più stabile, che fargli usare qualche grave scelleratezza contro a colui con il qual tu non vuoi che l' accordo si faccia.'



da Gonzaga to suspect his wife of infidelity with his secretary.<sup>38</sup> In a fit of jealous fury Francesco ordered the execution of his wife, the mother of several of his children, together with the secretary. Then he discovered the Visconti's treason. But it was too late for anything but impotent hatred. The infernal device had been successful; the Marquis of Mantua was no less discredited than the Marquis of Ferrara by his crime. It would seem that these men were not of the stamp and calibre to be successful villains, and that Gian Galeazzo had reckoned upon this defect in their character. Their violence caused them to be rather loathed than feared. The whole of Lombardy was now prostrate before the Milanese tyrant. His next move was to set foot in Tuscany. For this purpose Pisa had to be acquired; and here again he resorted to his devilish policy of inciting other men to crimes by which he alone would profit in the long run. Pisa was ruled at that time by the Gambacorta family, with an old merchant named Pietro at their head. This man had a friend and secretary called Jacopo Appiano, whom the Visconti persuaded to turn Judas, and to entrap and murder his benefactor and his children. The assassination took place in 1392. In 1399 Gherardo, son of Jacopo Appiano, who held Pisa at the disposal of Gian Galeazzo, sold him this city for 200,000 florins.<sup>39</sup> Perugia was next attacked. Here Pandolfo, chief of the Baglioni family, held a semi-constitutional authority, which the Visconti first helped him to transmute into a tyranny, and then, upon Pandolfo's assassination, seized as his own.<sup>40</sup> All Italy and even Germany had now begun to regard the usurpations of the Milanese Despot with alarm. But the sluggish Emperor Wenceslaus refused to take action against him; nay, in 1395 he granted to the Visconti the investiture of the Duchy of Milan for 100,000 florins, reserving only Pavia for himself. In 1399 the Duke laid hands on Siena; and in the next two years the plague came to his assistance by enfeebling the ruling families of Lucca and Bologna, the Guinizzi and the Bentivogli, so that he was now able to take possession of those cities.

There remained no power in Italy, except the Republic of Florence and the exiled but invincible Francesco da Carrara, to withstand his further progress. Florence delayed his conquests in Tuscany. Francesco managed to return to Padua. Still the peril which threatened

<sup>38</sup> This lady was a first cousin as well as sister-in-law of Gian Galeazzo Visconti, who in second marriage had taken Caterina, daughter of Bernabo Visconti, to wife. This fact makes his perfidy the more disgraceful.

<sup>39</sup> The Appiani retired to Piombino, where they founded a petty despotism. Appiano's crime, which gave a tyranny to his children, is similar to that of Tremacoldo, who murdered his masters, the Vistarini of Lodi, and to that of Luigi Gonzaga, who founded the Ducal house of Mantua by the murder of his patron, Passerino Buonacolsi.

<sup>40</sup> Pandolfo was murdered in 1393. Gian Galeazzo possessed himself of Perugia in 1400, having paved his way for the usurpation by causing Biordo Michelotti, the successor of the Baglioni, to be assassinated by his friend Francesco Guidalotti. It will be noticed that he proceeded slowly and surely in the case of each annexation, licking over his prey after he had throttled it and before he swallowed it, like a boa-constrictor.



the whole of Italy was imminent. The Duke of Milan was in the plenitude of manhood—rich, prosperous, and full of mental force. His acquisitions were well cemented; his armies in good condition; his treasury brim full; his generals highly paid. All his lieutenants in city and in camp respected the iron will and the deep policy of the despot who swayed their action from his arm-chair in Milan. He alone knew how to use the brains and hands that did him service, to keep them mutually in check, and by their regulated action to make himself not one but a score of men. At last, when all other hope of independence for Italy had failed, the plague broke out with fury in Lombardy. Gian Galeazzo retired to his isolated fortress of Marignano in order to escape infection. Yet there in 1402 he sickened. A comet appeared in the sky, to which he pointed as a sign of his approaching death—‘God could not but signalise the end of so supreme a rule,’ he told his attendants. He died aged 55. Italy drew a deep breath. The danger was passed.

The systematic plan conceived by Gian Galeazzo for the enslavement of Italy, the ability and force of intellect which sustained him in its execution, and the power with which he bent men to his will, are scarcely more extraordinary than the sudden dissolution of his dukedom at his death. Too timid to take the field himself, he had trained in his service a band of great commanders, among whom Alberico da Barbiano, Facino Cane, Pandolfo Malatesta, Jacopo dal Verme, Gabrino Fondulo, and Ottobon Terzo were the most distinguished. As long as he lived and held them in leading strings, all went well. But at his death his two sons were still mere boys. He had to entrust their persons, together with the conduct of his hardly won dominions, to these captains in conjunction with the Duchess Catherine and a certain Francesco Barbavara. This man had been the Duke’s body-servant, and was now the paramour of the Duchess. The generals refused to act with them; and each seized upon such portions of the Visconti inheritance as he could most easily acquire. The vast tyranny of the first Duke of Milan fell to pieces in a day. The whole being based on no legal right, but held together artificially by force and skill, its constituent parts either reasserted their independence or became the prey of adventurers.<sup>41</sup> Many scions of the old ejected families recovered their authority in the subject towns. We hear again of the Scotti at Piacenza, the Rossi and Correggi at Parma, the Benzoni at Crema, the Rusconi at Como, the Soardi and Colleoni at Gergamo, the Landi at Bobbio, the Cavalcabò at Cremona. Facino Cane appropriated Alessandria; Pandolfo Malatesta seized Brescia; Ottobon Terzo established himself in Parma. Meanwhile Giovanni Maria Visconti was proclaimed Duke of Milan, and his brother Filippo Maria occu-

<sup>41</sup> The anarchy which prevailed in Lombardy after Gian Galeazzo’s death makes it difficult to do more than signalise a few of these usurpations. Corio, pp. 292 et seq., contains the details.

pied Pavia. Gabriello, a bastard son of the first Duke, fortified himself in Crema.

In the despotic families of Italy, as already hinted, there was a progressive tendency to degeneration. The strain of tyranny sustained by force and craft for generations, the abuse of power and pleasure, the isolation and the dread in which the despots lived habitually, bred a kind of hereditary madness.<sup>42</sup> In the case of Giovanni Maria and Filippo Maria Visconti these predisposing causes of insanity were probably intensified by the fact that their father and mother were first cousins, the grandchildren of Stefano, son of Matteo il Grande. Be this as it may, the constitutional ferocity of the race appeared as monomania in Giovanni, and its constitutional timidity as something akin to madness in his brother. Gian Maria, Duke of Milan in nothing but in name, distinguished himself by cruelty and lust. He used the hounds of his ancestors no longer in the chase of boars, but of living men. All the criminals of Milan, and all whom he could get denounced as criminals, even the participators in his own enormities, were given up to his infernal sport. His huntsman, Squarcia Giramo, trained the dogs to their duty by feeding them on human flesh, and the Duke watched them tear his victims in pieces with the avidity of a lunatic.<sup>43</sup> In 1412 some Milanese nobles succeeded in murdering him, and threw his mangled corpse into the street. A prostitute is said to have covered it with roses. Filippo Maria meanwhile had married the widow of Facino Cane,<sup>44</sup> who brought him nearly half a million of florins for dowry, together with her husband's soldiers and the cities he had seized after Gian Galeazzo's death. By the help of this alliance Filippo was now gradually recovering the Lombard portion of his father's dukedom. The minor cities, purged by murder of their usurpers, once more fell into the grasp of the Milanese Despot, after a series of domestic and political tragedies that drenched their streets with blood. Piacenza was utterly depopulated. It is recorded that for the space of a year only three of its inhabitants remained within the walls.

Filippo, the last of the Visconti tyrants, was extremely ugly, and so sensitive about his ill-formed person that he scarcely dared to show himself abroad. He habitually lived in secret chambers, changed frequently from room to room, and when he issued from his palace refused salutations in the streets. As an instance of his nervousness, the chron-

<sup>42</sup> I may refer to Dr. Maudesley (*Mind and Matter*) for a scientific statement of the theory of madness developed by accumulated and hereditary vices.

<sup>43</sup> Corio, p. 301, mentions by name Giovanni da Pusterla and Bertolino del Maino as 'lacerati da i cani del Duca.' Members of the families of these men afterwards helped to kill him.

<sup>44</sup> Beatrice di Tenda, the wife of Facino Cane, was twenty years older than the Duke of Milan. As soon as the Visconti felt himself assured in his duchy, he caused a false accusation to be brought against her of adultery with the youthful Michele Oranbelli, and, in spite of her innocence, beheaded her in 1418. Machiavelli relates this act of perfidy with Tacitean conciseness (*Ist. Fior.* lib. i. vol. i. p. 55): 'Dipoi per esser grato de' benefici grandi, come sono quasi sempre tutti i Principi, accuso Beatrice sua moglie di stupro e la fece morire.'

iclers report that he could not endure to hear the noise of thunder.<sup>45</sup> At the same time he inherited much of his father's insight into character, and his power of controlling men more bold and active than himself. But he lacked the keen decision and broad views of Gian Galeazzo. He vacillated in policy and kept planning plots which seemed to have no object but his own disadvantage. Excess of caution made him surround the captains of his troops with spies, and check them at the moment when he feared they might become too powerful. This want of confidence neutralised the advantage which he might have gained by his choice of fitting instruments. Thus his selection of Francesco Sforza for his general against the Venetians in 1431 was a wise one. But he could not attach the great soldier of fortune to himself. Sforza took the pay of Florence against his old patron, and in 1441 forced him to a ruinous peace; one of the conditions of which was the marriage of the Duke of Milan's only daughter, Bianca, to the son of the peasant of Cotignola. Bianca was illegitimate, and Filippo Maria had no male heir. The great family of the Visconti had dwindled away. Consequently, after the Duke's death in 1447, Sforza found his way open to the Duchy of Milan, which he first secured by force and then claimed in right of his wife. An adverse claim was set up by the House of Orleans, Louis of Orleans having married Valentina, the legitimate daughter of Gian Galeazzo.<sup>46</sup> But both of these claims were invalid, since the investiture granted by Wenceslaus to the first duke excluded females. So Milan was once again thrown open to the competition of usurpers.

The inextinguishable desire for liberty in Milan blazed forth upon the death of the last duke. In spite of so many generations of Despots, the people still regarded themselves as sovereign, and established a republic. But a state which had served the Visconti for nearly two centuries, could not in a moment shake off its weakness and rely upon itself alone. The republic, feeling the necessity of mercenary aid, was short-sighted enough to engage Francesco Sforza as commander-in-chief against the Venetians, who had availed themselves of the anarchy in Lombardy to push their power west of the Adda.

Sforza, though the ablest general of the day, was precisely the man

<sup>45</sup> The most complete account of Filippo Maria Visconti written by a contemporary is that of Piero Candilo Decembrio (Muratori, vol. xx.). The student must, however, read between the lines of this biography, for Decembrio, at the request of Leonell d'Este, suppressed the darker colours of the portrait of his master. See the correspondence in Rosmini's *Life of Guarino da Verona*.

<sup>46</sup> This claim of the House of Orleans to Milan was one source of French interference in Italian affairs. Judged by Italian custom, Sforza's claim through Bianca was as good as that of the Orleans princes through Valentina, since bastardy was no real bar in the peninsula. It is said that Filippo Maria bequeathed his duchy to the Crown of Naples, by a will destroyed after his death. Could this bequest have taken effect, it might have united Italy beneath one sovereign. But the probabilities are that the jealousies of Florence, Venice, and Rome against Naples would have been so intensified as to lead to a bloody war of succession, and to hasten the French invasion.

whom common prudence should have prompted the burghers to mistrust. In one brilliant campaign he drove the Venetians back beyond the Adda, burned their fleet at Casal Maggiore on the Po, and utterly defeated their army at Caravaggio. Then he returned as conqueror to Milan, reduced the surrounding cities, blockaded the Milanese in their capital, and forced them to receive him as their Duke in 1450. Italy had lost a noble opportunity. If Florence and Venice had but taken part with Milan, and had stimulated the flagging energies of Genoa, four powerful republics in federation might have maintained the freedom of the whole peninsula and have resisted foreign interference. But Cosimo de' Medici, who was silently founding the despotism of his own family in Florence, preferred to see a duke in Milan; and Venice, guided by the Doge Francesco Forcari, thought only of territorial aggrandisement. The chance was lost. The liberties of Milan were extinguished. A new dynasty was established in the duchy, grounded on a false hereditary claim, which, as long as it continued, gave a sort of colour to the superior but still illegal pretensions of the house of Orleans. It is impossible at this point in the history of Italy to refrain from judging that the Italians had become incapable of local self-government, and that the prevailing tendency to depotism was not the result of accidents in any combination, but of internal and inevitable laws of evolution.

It was at this period that the old despotisms founded by Imperial Vicars and Captains of the People came to be supplanted or crossed by those of military adventurers, just as at a somewhat later time the Condottiere and the Pope's nominee were blent in Cesare Borgia. This is therefore the proper moment for glancing at the rise and influence of mercenary generals in Italy, before proceeding to sketch the history of the Sforza family.

After the wars in Sicily, carried on by the Angevine princes, had ceased (1302), a body of disbanded soldiers, chiefly foreigners, was formed under Fra Ruggieri, a Templar, and swept the South of Italy. Giovanni Villani marks this as the first sign of the scourge which was destined to prove so fatal to the peace of Italy.<sup>47</sup> But it was not any merely accidental outbreak of Banditti, such as this, which established the Condottiere system. The causes were far more deeply seated in the nature of Italian despotism and in the peculiar requirements of the republics. We have already seen how Frederick II. found it convenient to employ Saracens in his warfare with the Holy See. The same desire to procure troops incapable of sympathising with the native population induced the Scala and Visconti tyrants to hire German, Breton, Swiss, English, and even Hungarian guards. These foreign troops remained at the disposal of the tyrants and superseded the national militia. The people of Italy were reserved for taxation; the foreigners carried on the wars of the princes. Nor was this policy otherwise than popular.

<sup>47</sup> VIII. 51.

It relieved all classes from the conscription, leaving the burgher free to ply his trade, the peasant to till his fields, and disarming the nobles who were still rebellious and turbulent within the city walls. The same custom gained ground among the Republics. Rich Florentine citizens preferred to stay at home at ease, or to travel abroad for commerce, while they entrusted their military operations to paid generals.<sup>48</sup> Venice, jealous of her own citizens, raised no levies in her immediate territory, and made a rule of never confiding her armies to Venetians. Her admirals, indeed, were selected from the great families of the Lagoons. But her troops were placed beneath the discipline of foreigners. The warfare of the Church, again, had of necessity to be conducted on the same principles; for it did not often happen that a Pope arose like Julius II., rejoicing in the sound of cannon and the life of camps. In this way principalities and republics gradually denationalised their armies, and came to carrying on campaigns by the aid of foreign mercenaries under paid commanders. The generals, wishing as far as possible to render their troops movable and compact, suppressed the infantry, and confined their attention to perfecting the cavalry. Heavy-armed cavaliers, officered by professional captains, fought the battles of Italy; while despots and republics schemed in their castles, or debated in their council-chambers, concerning objects of warfare about which the soldiers of fortune were indifferent. The pay received by men-at-arms was more considerable than that of the most skilled labourers in any peaceful trade. The perils of military service in Italy, conducted on the most artificial principles, were but slight; while the opportunities of self-indulgence—of pillage during war and of pleasure in the brief intervals of peace—attracted all the hot blood of the country to this service.<sup>49</sup> Therefore, in course of time, the profession of Condottieri fascinated the needier nobility of Italy, and the ranks of their men-at-arms were recruited by townsfolk and peasants, who deliberately chose a life of adventure.

At first the foreign troops of the despots were engaged as body-guards, and were controlled by the authority of their employers. But the captains soon rendered themselves independent and entered into military contracts on their own account. The first notable example of a roving troop existing for the sake of pillage, and selling its services to any bidder, was the so-called Great Company (1343), commanded by the German Guarnieri, or Duke Werner, who wrote upon his corslet: 'Enemy of God, of Pity, and of Mercy.' This band was employed in 1348 by

<sup>48</sup> We may remember how the Spanish general Cardona, in 1325, misused his captaincy of the Florentine forces to keep rich members of the republican militia in unhealthy stations, extorting money from them as the price of freedom from perilous or irksome service.

<sup>49</sup> Matarazzo, in his Chronicle of Perugia, gives a lively picture of an Italian city, in which the nobles for generations followed the trade of Condottieri, while the people enlisted in their bands—to the utter ruin of the morals and the peace of the community.

the league of the Montferrat, La Scala, Carrara, Este, and Gonzaga houses, formed to check the Visconti.

'In the middle of the fourteenth century,' writes Sismondi,<sup>50</sup> 'all the soldiers who served in Italy were foreigners: at the end of the same century they were all, or nearly all, Italian.' This sentence indicates a most important change in the Condottiere system which took place during the lifetime of Gian Galeazzo Visconti. Alberico da Barbiano, a noble of Romagna, and the ancestor of the Milanese house of Belgiojoso, adopted the career of Condottiere, and formed a Company, called the Company of S. George, into which he admitted none but Italians. The consequence of this rule was that he Italianised the profession of mercenary arms for the future. All the great captains of the period were formed in his ranks, during the course of those wars which he conducted for the Duke of Milan. Two rose to paramount importance—Braccio da Montone, who varied his master's system by substituting the tactics of detached bodies of cavalry for the solid phalanx in which Barbiano had moved his troops; and Sforza Attendolo, who adhered to the old method. Sforza got his name from his great physical strength. He was a peasant of the village of Cotignola, who, being invited to quit the mattock for a sword, threw his pickaxe into an oak, and cried, 'If it stays there, it is a sign that I shall make my fortune.' The axe stuck in the tree and Sforza went forth to found a line of dukes.<sup>51</sup> After the death of Barbiano in 1409, Sforza and Braccio separated and formed two distinct companies known as the Sforzeschi and Bracceschi, who carried on between them, sometimes in combination, but usually in opposition, all the wars of Italy for the next twenty years. These old comrades, who had parted in pursuit of their several advantages, found that they had more to lose than to gain by defeating each other in any bloody or inconveniently decisive engagement. Therefore they adopted systems of campaigning which should cost them as little as possible, but which enabled them to exhibit a chess-player's capacity for designing clever checkmates.<sup>52</sup> Both Braccio and Sforza

<sup>50</sup> Vol. v. p. 207.

<sup>51</sup> This is the commonly received legend. Corio, p. 255, does not draw attention to the lowness of Sforza's origin, but says that he was only twelve years of age when he enlisted in the corps of Boldrino di Panigale, condottiere of the Church. His robust physical qualities were hereditary for many generations in his family. His son Francesco was tall and well made, the best runner, jumper, and wrestler of his day. He marched, summer and winter, bareheaded; needed but little sleep; was spare in diet, and self-indulgent only in the matter of women. Galeazzo Maria, though stained by despicable vices, was a powerful prince, who ruled his duchy with a strong arm. Of his illegitimate daughter, Caterina, the wife of Girolamo Riario, a story is told, which illustrates the strong coarse vein that still distinguished this brood of princes. [See Dennistoun, *Dukes of Urbino*, vol. i. p. 292, for Boccacini's account of the Siege of Forli, sustained by Caterina in 1488. Compare Sismondi, vol. vii. p. 251.] Caterina Riario Sforza, as a woman, was no unworthy inheritor of her grandfather's personal heroism and genius for government.

<sup>52</sup> I shall have to notice the evils of this system in another place, while reviewing the *Principe* of Machiavelli. In that treatise the Florentine historian traces the whole ruin of Italy during the sixteenth century to the employment of mercenaries.

died in 1424, and were succeeded respectively by Nicolo Piccinino and Francesco Sforza. These two men became in their turn the chief champions of Italy. At the same time other Condottieri rose into notice. The Malatesta family at Rimini, the ducal house of Urbino, the Orsini and the Vitelli of the Roman States, the Varani of Camerino, the Baglioni of Perugia, and the younger Gonzaghi furnished republics and princes with professional leaders of tried skill and independent resources. The vassals of these noble houses were turned into men-at-arms, and the chiefs acquired more importance in their roving military life than they could have gained within the narrow circuit of their little states.

The biography of one of these Condottieri deserves special notice, since it illustrates the vicissitudes of fortune to which such men were exposed, as well as their relations to their patrons. Francesco Carmagnuola was a Piedmontese. He first rose into notice at the battle of Monza in 1412, when Filippo Maria Visconti observed his capacity and bravery, and afterwards advanced him to the captaincy of a troop. Having helped to reduce the Visconti duchy to order, Carmagnuola found himself disgraced and suspected without good reason by the Duke of Milan; and in 1426 he took the pay of the Venetians against his old master. During the next year he showed the eminence of his abilities as a general; for he defeated the combined forces of Piccinino, Sforza, and other captains of the Visconti, and took them prisoners at Macalo. Carmagnuola neither imprisoned nor murdered his foes.<sup>53</sup> He gave them their liberty, and four years later had to sustain a defeat from Sforza at Soncino. Other reverses of fortune followed, which brought upon him the suspicion of bad faith or incapacity. When he returned to Venice, the state received their captain with all honours, and displayed unusual pomp in his admission to the audience of the Council. But no sooner had their velvet clutches closed upon him, than they threw him into prison, instituted a secret impeachment of his conduct, and on May 5, 1432, led him out with his mouth gagged to execution on the Piazza. No reason was assigned for this judicial murder. Had Carmagnuola been convicted of treason? Was he being punished for his ill success in the campaign of the preceding years? The Republic

<sup>53</sup> Such an act of violence, however consistent with the morality of a Cesare Borgia, a Venetian Republic, or a Duke of Milan, would have been directly opposed to the code of honour in use among Condottieri. Nothing, indeed, is more singular among the contradictions of this period than the humanity in the field displayed by hired captains. War was made less on adverse armies than on the population of provinces. The adventurers respected each other's lives, and treated each other with courtesy. They were a brotherhood who played at campaigning, rather than the representatives of forces seriously bent on crushing each other to extermination. Machiavelli says (*Princ.* cap. xii.) 'Aveano usato ogni industria per levar via a se e a' soldati la fatica e la paura, non s'ammazzando nelle zuffe, ma pigliandosi prigionieri e senza taglia.' At the same time the license they allowed themselves against the cities and the districts they invaded is well illustrated by the pillage of Piacenza in 1447 by Francesco Sforza's troops. The anarchy of a sack lasted forty days, during which the inhabitants were indiscriminately sold as slaves, or tortured for their hidden treasure. Sism. vi. 170.



of Venice, by the secrecy in which she enveloped this dark act of vengeance, sought to inspire the whole body of her officials with vague alarm.

But to return to the Duchy of Milan. Francesco Sforza entered the capital as conqueror in 1450, and was proclaimed Duke. He never obtained the sanction of the Empire to his title, though Frederick III. was proverbially lavish of such honours. But the great Condottiere, possessing the substance, did not care for the external show of monarchy. He ruled firmly, wisely, and for those times well, attending to the prosperity of his states, maintaining good discipline in his cities, and losing no ground by foolish or ambitious schemes. Louis XI. of France is said to have professed himself Sforza's pupil in statecraft, than which no greater tribute could be paid to his political sagacity. In 1466 he died, leaving three sons, Galeazzo, Duke of Milan, the Cardinal Ascanio, and Lodovico, surnamed Il Moro.

'Francesco's crown,' says Ripamonti, 'was destined to pass to more than six inheritors, and these five successions were accomplished by a series of tragic events in his family. Galeazzo, his son, was murdered because of his abominable crimes, in the presence of his people, before the altar, in the middle of the sacred rites. Giovanni Galeazzo, who followed him, was poisoned by his uncle Lodovico. Lodovico was imprisoned by the French and died of grief in a dungeon.<sup>54</sup> One of his sons perished in the same way; the other, after years of misery and exile, was restored in his childless old age to a throne which had been undermined, and when he died, his dynasty was extinct. This was the recompense for the treason of Francesco to the State of Milan. It was for such successes that he passed his life in perfidy, privation, and danger.' In these rapid successions we trace, besides the demoralisation of the Sforza family, the action of new forces from without. France, Germany, and Spain appeared upon the stage; and against these great powers the policy of Italian despotism was helpless.

We have now reached the threshold of the true Renaissance, and a new period is being opened for Italian politics. The despots are about to measure their strength with the nations of the North. It was Lodovico Sforza who, by his invitation of Charles VIII. into Italy, inaugurated the age of Foreign Enslavement. His biography belongs, therefore, to another chapter. But the life of Galeazzo Maria, husband of Bona of Savoy, and uncle by marriage to Charles VIII. of France, forms an integral part of that history of the Milanese Despots which we have hitherto been tracing. In him the passions of Gian Maria Visconti were repeated with the addition of extravagant vanity. We may notice in particular his parade-expedition in 1471 to Florence, when he flaunted the wealth extorted from his Milanese subjects before the sober-minded

<sup>54</sup> In the castle of Loches, there is said to be a roughly painted wall-picture of a man in a helmet over the chimney in the room known as his prison, with this legend, *Voilà un qui n'est pas content*. Tradition gives it to Il Moro.



citizens of a still free city. Fifty palfreys for the Duchess, fifty chargers for the Duke, trapped in cloth of gold; a hundred men-at-arms and five hundred foot soldiers for a body-guard; five hundred couples of hounds and a multitude of hawks; preceded him. His suite of courtiers numbered two thousand on horseback: 200,000 golden florins were expended on this pomp. Machiavelli (*Ist. Fior.* lib. 7) marks this visit of the Duke of Milan as a turning-point from austere simplicity to luxury and license in the manners of the Florentines, whom Lorenzo de' Medici was already bending to his yoke. The most extravagant lust, the meanest and the vilest cruelty, supplied Galeazzo Maria with daily recreation.<sup>55</sup> He it was who used to feed his victims on abominations or to bury them alive, and who found a pleasure in wounding or degrading those whom he had made his confidants and friends. The details of his assassination, in 1476, though well known, are so interesting that I may be excused for pausing to repeat them here; especially as they illustrate a moral characteristic of this period which is intimately connected with despotism. Three young nobles of Milan, educated in the classic literature by Montano, a distinguished Bolognese scholar, had imbibed from their studies of Greek and Latin history an ardent thirst for liberty and a deadly hatred of tyrants.<sup>56</sup> Their names were Carlo Visconti, Girolamo Olgiati, and Giannandrea Lampugnani. Galeazzo Sforza had wounded the two latter in the points which men hold dearest—their honour and their property<sup>57</sup>—by outraging the sister of Olgiati and by depriving Lampugnani of the patronage of the Abbey of Miramondo. The spirit of Harmodius and Virginius was kindled in the friends, and they determined to rid Milan of her Despot. After some meetings in the garden of S. Ambrogio, where they matured their plans, they laid their project of tyrannicide as a holy offering before the patron saint of Milan.<sup>58</sup> Then having spent a few days in poignard exercise for the sake of training,<sup>59</sup> they took their place within the precincts of S. Stephen's Church. There they received the sacrament and addressed themselves in prayer to the Protomartyr, whose fane was about to be hallowed by the murder of a monster odious to God and

<sup>55</sup> Allegretto Allegretti, *Diari Sanesi*, in Muratori, xxiii. p. 777, and Corio, p. 425, should be read for the details of his pleasures. See too his character by Machiavelli, *Ist. Fior.* lib. 7, vol. ii. p. 316. Yet Giovio calls him a just and firm ruler, stained only with the vice of unbridled sensuality.

<sup>56</sup> The study of the classics, especially of Plutarch, at this time, as also during the French Revolution, fired the imagination of patriots. Lorenzino de' Medici appealed to the example of Timoleon in 1537, and Pietro Paolo Boscoli to that of Brutus in 1513.

<sup>57</sup> 'Le inguirie conviene che siano nella roba, nel sangue, o nell' onore. . . . La roba e l' onore sono quelle due cose che offendono più gli uomini che alcun' altra offesa, e dalle quali il principe si debbe guardare: perchè e' non può mai spogliare uno tanto che non gli resti un coltello da vendicarsi; non può tanto disonorare uno che non gli resti un animo ostinato alla vendetta.' Mach. *Disc.* iii. 6.

<sup>58</sup> See Olgiati's prayer to Saint Ambrose in Sismondi, vii. 87, and in Mach. *Ist. Fior.* lib. 7.

<sup>59</sup> Giovanni Santi's chronicle, quoted by Dennistoun, vol. i. p. 223, describes the conspirators rehearsing on a wooden puppet.

man. It was on the morning of December 26, 1476, that the duke entered San Stefano. At one and the same moment the daggers of the three conspirators struck him—Olgani's in the breast, Visconti's in the back, Lampugnani's in the belly. He cried 'Ah Dio!' and fell dead upon the pavement. The friends were unable to make their escape; Visconti and Lampugnani were killed on the spot; Olgiati was seized, tortured, and torn to death.

In the interval which elapsed between the rack and the pincers, Olgiati had time to address this memorable speech to the priest who urged him to repent: 'As for the noble action for which I am about to die, it is this which gives my conscience peace; to this I trust for pardon from the Judge of all. Far from repenting, if I had to come ten times to life in order ten times to die by these same torments, I should not hesitate to dedicate my blood and all my powers to an object so sublime.' When the hangman stood above him, ready to begin the work of mutilation, he is said to have exclaimed: 'Mors acerba, fama perpetua, stabit vetus memoria facti—my death is untimely, my fame eternal, the memory of the deed will last for aye.' He was only twenty-two years of age.<sup>60</sup> There is an antique grandeur about the outlines of this story, strangely mingled with mediæval Catholicism in the details, which makes it typical of the Renaissance. Conspiracies against rulers were common at the time in Italy; but none was so pure and honourable as this. Of the Pazzi Conjuraction (1478), which Sixtus IV. directed to his everlasting infamy against the Medici, I shall have to speak in another place. It is enough to mention here in passing the patriotic attempt of Girolamo Gentile against Galeazzo Sforza at Genoa in 1476, and the more selfish plot of Nicolo d'Este, in the same year, against his uncle Ercole, who held the Marquisate of Ferrara to the prejudice of his own claim. The latter tragedy was rendered memorable by the vengeance taken by Ercole. He beheaded Nicolo and his cousin Azzo together with twenty-five of his comrades, effectually preventing by this bloodshed any future attempt to set aside his title. Falling as these four conspiracies do within the space of two years, and displaying varied features of antique heroism, simple patriotism, dynastic dissension, and ecclesiastical perfidy, they present examples of the different forms and causes of political tragedies with a noteworthy and significant conciseness.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>60</sup> The whole story may be read in Ripamonti, under the head of 'Confessio Olgiati;' in Corio, who was a page of the Duke's and an eye-witness of the murder; and in the seventh book of Machiavelli's *History*. Sismondi's summary and references, vol. vii. pp. 86-90, are very full.

<sup>61</sup> It is worthy of notice that very many tyrannicides took place in Church—for example, the murders of Francesco Vico dei Prefetti, of the Varani, the Chiabelli, Giuliano de' Medici, and Galeazzo Maria Sforza. The choice of public service, as the best occasion for the commission of these crimes, points to the guarded watchfulness maintained by tyrants in their palaces and on the streets. Banquets and festivities offered another kind of opportunity; and it was on such occasions that domestic tragedies, like Oliverotto's murder of his uncle and Grifonetto Baglioni's treason, were accomplished.

Such was the actual condition of Italy at the end of the fifteenth century. Neither public nor private morality in our sense of the word existed. The crimes of the tyrants against their subjects and the members of their own families had produced a correlative order of crime in the people over whom they tyrannised. Cruelty was met by conspiracy. Tyrannicide became honourable; and the proverb, 'He who gives his own life can take a tyrant's' had worked itself into popular language. At this point it may be well to glance at the opinions concerning public murder which prevailed in Italy. Machiavelli, in the 'Discoursi,' iii. 6, discusses the whole subject with his usual frigid and exhaustive analysis. It is no part of his critical method to consider the morality of the matter. He deals with the facts of history scientifically. The esteem in which tyrannicide was held at Florence is proved by the erection of Donatello's Judith in 1495, at the gate of the Palazzo Pubblico, with this inscription, *exemplum salutis publicæ cives posuere*. All the political theorists agree that to rid a state of its despot is a virtuous act. They only differ about its motives and its utility. In Guicciardini's 'Reggimento di Firenze' ('Op. Ined.' vol. ii. pp. 53, 54, 114) the various motives of tyrannicide are discussed, and it is concluded that *pochissimi sono stati quelli che si siano mossi meramente per amore della libertà della sua patria, a' quali si conviene suprema laude*.<sup>62</sup> Donato Gianotti ('Opere,' vol. i. p. 341) bids the conspirator consider whether the mere destruction of the Despot will suffice to restore his city to true liberty and good government—a caution by which Lorenzino de' Medici in his assassination of Duke Alessandro might have profited; for he killed one tyrant in order only to make room for another. Lorenzino's own Apology (Varchi, vol. iii. pp. 283-295) is an important document, as showing that the murderer of a Despot counted on the sympathy of honourable men. So, too, is the verdict of Boscolo's confessor ('Arch Stor.' vol. i. p. 309), who pronounced that conspiracy against a tyrant was no crime. Nor did the demoralisation of the age stop here. Force, which had been substituted for Law in government, became, as it were, the mainspring of society. Murders, poisoning, rapes, and treasons were common incidents of private as of public life.<sup>63</sup> In cities like Naples bloodguilt could be atoned for at an inconceivably low rate. A man's life was worth scarcely more than that of a horse. The palaces of the nobles swarmed with professional cut-throats, and the great

<sup>62</sup> 'Very few indeed have those been, whose motive for tyrannicide was a pure love of their country's liberty; and these deserve the highest praise.'

<sup>63</sup> It is quite impossible to furnish a complete view of Italian society under this aspect. Students must be referred to the stories of the novelists, who collected the more dramatic incidents and presented them in the form of entertaining legends. It may suffice here to mention Bartolommeo Colleoni, Angelo Poliziano, and Pontano, all of whom owed their start in life to the murder of their respective fathers by assassins; to Varchi and Filelfo, whose lives were attempted by cut-throats; to Cellini, Perugino, Masaccio, Berni, in each of whose biographies poison and the knife play their parts. If men of letters and artists were exposed to these perils, the dangers of the great and noble may be readily imagined.

ecclesiastics claimed for their abodes the right of sanctuary. Popes sold absolution for the most horrible excesses, and granted indulgences beforehand for the commission of crimes of lust and violence. Success was the standard by which acts were judged; and the man who could help his friends, intimidate his enemies, and carve a way to fortune for himself by any means he chose, was regarded as a hero. Machiavelli's use of the word *virtù* is in this relation most instructive. It has altogether lost the Christian sense of *virtue*, and retains only so much of the Roman *virtus* as is applicable to the courage, intellectual ability, and personal prowess of one who has achieved his purpose, be that what it may. The upshot of this state of things was that individuality of character and genius obtained a freer scope at this time in Italy than during any other period of modern history.

At the same time it must not be forgotten that during this period the art and culture of the Renaissance were culminating. Filelfo was receiving the gold of Filippo Maria Visconti. Guarino of Verona was instructing the heir of Ferrara, and Vittorino da Feltre was educating the children of the Marquis of Mantua. Lionardo was delighting Milan with his music and his magic world of painting. Poliziano was pouring forth honeyed eloquence at Florence. Ficino was expounding Plato. Boiardo was singing the Prelude to Ariosto's melodies at Ferrara. Pico della Mirandola was dreaming of a reconciliation of the Hebrew, Pagan, and Christian traditions. It is necessary to note these facts in passing; just as when we are surveying the history of letters and the arts, it becomes us to remember the crimes and the madness of the despots who patronised them. This was an age in which even the wildest and most perfidious of tyrants felt the ennobling influences and the sacred thirst of knowledge. Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta, the Lord of Rimini, might be selected as a true type of the princes who united a romantic zeal for culture with the vices of barbarians.<sup>64</sup> The coins which bear the portraits of this man, together with the medallions carved in red Verona marble on his church at Rimini, show a narrow forehead, protuberant above bushy eyebrows, a long hooked nose, hollow cheeks, and petulant, passionate, compressed lips. The whole face seems ready to flash with sudden violence, to merge its self-control in a spasm of fury. Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta killed three wives in succession, violated his daughter, and attempted the chastity of his own son. So much of him belongs to the mere savage. He caused the magnificent church of S. Francesco at Rimini to be raised by Leo Alberti in a manner more worthy of a Pagan Pantheon than of a Christian temple. He encrusted it with exquisite bas-reliefs in marble, the triumphs of the earliest Renaissance style, carved his own name and ensigns upon every scroll and frieze and point of vantage in the building, and dedicated a shrine here to his concubine—*Divæ Isottæ Sacrum*. So much of him belongs to the Neo-Pagan of the fifteenth century.

<sup>64</sup> For a fuller account of him, see my *Sketches in Italy and Greece*, article 'Rimini.'

He brought back from Greece the mortal remains of the philosopher Gemistos Plethon, buried them in a sarcophagus outside his church, and wrote upon the tomb this epigraph: 'These remains of Gemistus of Byzantium, chief of the sages of his day, Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta, son of Pandolfo, commander in the war against the king of the Turks in the Morea, induced by the mighty love with which he burns for men of learning, brought hither and placed within this chest. 1466.' He, the most fretful and turbulent of men, read books with patient care, and bore the contradiction of pedants in the course of long discussions on philosophy and arts and letters. So much of him belonged to the new spirit of the coming age, in which the zeal for erudition was a passion, and the spell of science was stronger than the charms of love. At the same time, as Condottiere, he displayed all the treasons, duplicities, cruelties, sacrileges, and tortuous policies to which the most accomplished villain of the age could have aspired.

It would be easy, following in the steps of Tiraboschi, to describe the patronage awarded in the fifteenth century to men of letters by princes—the protection extended by Nicholas III. of Ferrara to Guarino and Aurispa—the brilliant promise of his son Leonello, who corresponded with Poggio, Filelfo, Guarino, Francesco Barbaro, and other scholars—the liberality of Duke Borso, whose purse was open to poor students. Or we might review the splendid culture of the Court of Naples, where Alfonso committed the education of his terrible son Ferdinand to the care of Lorenzo Valla and Antonio Beccadelli.<sup>65</sup> More insight, however, into the nature of Italian despotism in all its phases may be gained by turning from Milan to Urbino, and by sketching a portrait of the good Duke Frederick.<sup>66</sup> The life of Frederick, Count of Montefeltro, created Duke of Urbino in 1474 by Pope Sixtus IV., covers the better part of the fifteenth century (b. 1422, d. 1482). A little corner of old Umbria lying between the Apennines and the Adriatic, Rimini and Ancona, formed his patrimony. Speaking roughly, the whole duchy was but forty miles square, and the larger portion consisted of bare hillsides and ruinous ravines. Yet this poor territory became the centre of a splendid court. 'Federigo,' says his biographer, Muzio, 'maintained a suite so numerous and distinguished as to rival any royal household.' The chivalry of Italy flocked to Urbino in order to learn manners and the art of war from the most noble general of his day. 'His household,' we hear from Vespasiano, 'which consisted of 500 mouths entertained at his own cost, was governed less like a company of soldiers than a strict religious community. There was no gaming nor

<sup>65</sup> The Panormita; author, by the way, of the shameless *Hermaphroditus*. This fact is significant. The moral sense was extinct when such a pupil was entrusted to such a tutor.

<sup>66</sup> For the following details I am principally indebted to *The Memoirs of the Dukes of Urbino*, by James Dennistoun; 3 vols., Longmans, 1851. Vespasiano's *Life of Duke Frederick* (*Vite di uomini illustri*, pp. 72-112) is one of the most charming literary portraits extant. It has, moreover, all the value of a personal memoir, for Vespasiano had lived in close relation with the Duke as his librarian.

swearing, but the men conversed with the utmost sobriety.' In a list of the court officers we find forty-five counts of the duchy and of other states, seventeen gentlemen, five secretaries, four teachers of grammar, logic, and philosophy, fourteen clerks in public office, five architects and engineers, five readers during meals, four transcribers of MSS. The library, collected by Vespasiano during fourteen years of assiduous labour, contained copies of all the Greek and Latin authors then discovered, the principal treatises on theology and church history, a complete series of Italian poets, historiographers, and commentators, various medical, mathematical, and legal works, essays on music, military tactics and the arts, together with such Hebrew books as were accessible to copyists. Every volume was bound in crimson and silver, and the whole collection cost upwards of 30,000 ducats. For the expenses of so large a household, and the maintenance of this fine library, not to mention a palace that was being built with churches that required adornment, the mere revenues of the duchy could not have sufficed. Federigo owed his wealth to his engagements as a general. Military service formed his trade. 'In 1453,' says Dennistoun, 'his war-pay from Alfonso of Naples exceeded 8,000 ducats a month, and for many years he had from him and his son an annual peace-pension of 6,000 in name of past-services. At the close of his life, when captain-general of the Italian league, he drew in war 165,000 ducats, of annual stipend, 45,000 being his own share; in peace, 65,000 in all.' As a Condottiere, Federigo was famous in this age of broken faith for his plain dealing and sincerity. Only one piece of questionable practice—the capture of Verucchio in 1462 by a forged letter pretending to come from Sigismondo Malatesta—stained his character for honesty. To his soldiers in the field he was considerate and generous; to his enemies compassionate and merciful.<sup>67</sup> 'In military science,' says Vespasiano, 'he was excelled by no commander of his time; uniting energy with judgment, he conquered by prudence as much as by force. The like wariness was observed in all his affairs; and in none of his many battles was he worsted. Nor may I omit the strict observance of good faith, wherein he never failed. All to whom he once gave his word might testify to his inviolate performance of it.' The same biographer adds that 'he was singularly religious, and most observant of the Divine commands. No morning passed without his hearing mass upon his knees.'

While a boy, Federigo had been educated in the school of Vittorino da Feltre at Mantua. Gian Francesco Gonzaga invited that eminent scholar to his court in 1425 for the education of his sons and daughters, assembling round him subordinate teachers in grammar, mathematics, music, painting, dancing, riding, and all noble exercises. The system supervised by Vittorini included not only the acquisition of scholarship,

<sup>67</sup> See the testimony of Francesco di Giorgio; Dennistoun, vol. i. p. 259. The sack of Volterra was, however, a blot upon his humanity.

but also training in many sports and the cultivations of the moral character. Many of the noblest Italians were his pupils. Ghiberto da Correggio, Battista Pallavicini, Taddeo Manfredi of Faenza, Gabbriello da Cremona, Francesco da Castiglione, Niccolo Perotti, together with the Count of Montefeltro, lived in Vittorino's house, associating with the poorer students whom the benevolent philosopher instructed for the love of learning. Ambrogio Camaldolese in a letter to Niccolo Niccoli gives this animated picture of the Mantuan school: 'I went again to visit Vittorino and to see his Greek books. He came to meet me with the children of the prince, two sons and a daughter of seven years. The elder boy is eleven, the younger five. There are also other children of about ten, sons of nobles, as well as other pupils. He teaches them Greek, and they can write that language well. I saw a translation from Saint Chrysostom made by one of them which pleased me much.' And again a few years later: 'He brought me Giovanni Lucido, son of the Marquis, a boy of about fourteen, whom he has educated, and who then recited two hundred lines composed by him upon the shows with which the Emperor was received in Mantua. The verses were most beautiful, but the sweetness and elegance of his recitation made them still more graceful. He also showed me two propositions added by him to Euclid, which prove how eminent he promises to be in mathematical studies. There was also a little daughter of the Marquis of about ten, who writes Greek beautifully; and many other pupils, some of noble birth, attended them.' The medal struck by Pisanello in honour of Vittorino da Feltre bears the ensign of a pelican feeding her young from a wound in her own breast—a symbol of the master's self-sacrifice.<sup>68</sup> I intend to return in the second volume of this work to Vittorino. It is enough here to remark that in this good school the Duke of Urbino acquired that solid culture which distinguished him through life. In after years, when the cares of his numerous engagements fell thick upon him, we hear from Vespasiano that he still prosecuted his studies, reading Aristotle's 'Ethics,' 'Politics,' and 'Physics,' listening to the works of S. Thomas Aquinas and Scotus read aloud, perusing at one time the Greek fathers and at another the Latin historians.<sup>69</sup> How profitably he spent his day at Urbino may be gathered from this account of his biographer: 'He was on horseback at daybreak with four or six mounted attendants, and not more, and with one or two foot servants unarmed. He would ride out three or four miles, and be back again when the rest of his court rose from bed. After dismounting, he heard mass. Then he went into a garden open at all sides, and gave audience to those who listed until dinner-time. At table, all the doors were open; any man could enter where his lordship was, for he never ate except with a full hall.

<sup>68</sup> Prendilacqua, the biographer of Vittorino, says that he died so poor that his funeral expenses had to be defrayed.

<sup>69</sup> Pius II. in his Commentaries gives an interesting account of the conversations concerning the tactics of the ancients which he held with Frederick, in 1461, in the neighborhood of Tivoli.



According to the season he had books read out as follows—in Lent, spiritual works; at other times, the history of Livy—all in Latin. His food was plain; he took no comfits, and drank no wine, except drinks of pomegranate, cherry, or apples.' After dinner he heard causes, and gave sentence in the Latin tongue. Then he would visit the nuns of Santa Chiara, or watch the young men of Urbino at their games, using the courtesy of perfect freedom with his subjects. His reputation as a patron of the arts and of learning was widely spread. 'To hear him converse with a sculptor,' says Vespasiano, 'you would have thought he was a master of the craft. In painting, too, he displayed the most acute judgment; and as he could not find among the Italians worthy masters of oil colours, he sent to Flanders for one, who painted for him the philosophers and poets and doctors of the Church. He also brought from Flanders masters in the art of tapestry.' Pontano, Ficino, and Poggio dedicated works of importance to his name; and Pirro Perotti, in the preface to his uncle's '*Cornucopia*,' draws a quaint picture of the reception which so learned a book was sure to meet with at Urbino.<sup>70</sup> But Frederick was not merely an accomplished prince. Concurrent testimony proves that he remained a good husband and a constant friend throughout his life, that he controlled his natural quickness of temper, and subdued the sensual appetites which in that age of lax morality he might have indulged without reproach. In his relations to his subjects he showed what a paternal monarch should be, conversing familiarly with the citizens of Urbino, accosting them with head uncovered, inquiring into the necessities of the poorer artisans, relieving the destitute, dowering orphan girls, and helping distressed shopkeepers with loans. Numerous anecdotes are told which illustrate his consideration for his old servants, and his anxiety for the welfare and good order of his state. At a time when the Pope and the King of Naples were making money by monopolies of corn, the Duke of Urbino filled his granaries from Apulia, and sold bread during a year of scarcity at a cheap rate to his poor subjects. Nor would he allow his officers to prosecute the indigent for debts incurred by such purchases. He used to say: 'I am not a merchant; it is enough to have saved my people from hunger.' We must remember that this excellent prince had a direct interest in maintaining the prosperity and goodwill of his duchy. His profession was warfare, and the district of Urbino supplied him with his best troops. Yet this should not diminish the respect due to the foresight and benevolence of a Condottiere who knew how to carry on his calling with humanity and generosity. Federico wore the Order of the Garter, with Henry VII.

<sup>70</sup> The preface to the original edition of the *Cornucopia* is worth reading for the lively impression which it conveys of Federico's personality: 'Admirabitur in te divinam illam corporis proceritatem, membrorum robur eximium, venerandam oris dignitatem, ætatis maturam gravitatem, divinam quandam majestatem cum humanitate conjunctam, totum præterea talem qualem esse oportebat eum principem quem nuper pontifex maximus et universus senatus omnium rerum suarum et totius ecclesiastici imperii duce[m] moderatoremque constituit.'



conferred on him, the Neapolitan Order of the Ermine, and the Papal Decorations of the Rose, the Hat, the Sword. He served three pontiffs, two kings of Naples, and two dukes of Milan. The Republic of Florence and more than one Italian League appointed him their general in the field. If his military career was less brilliant than that of the two Sforzas, Piccinino, or Carmagnuola, he avoided the crimes to which ambition led some of these men and the rocks on which they struck. At his death he transmitted a flourishing duchy, a cultivated court, a renowned name, and the leadership of the Italian League to his son, Guidobaldo.

The young Duke, whose court, described by Castiglione, may be said to have set the model of good breeding to all Europe, began life under the happiest auspices. From his tutor, Odasio of Padua, we hear that even in boyhood he cared only for study and for manly sports. His memory was so retentive that he could repeat whole treatises by heart after the lapse of ten or fifteen years, nor did he ever forget what he had resolved to retain. In the Latin and Greek languages he became an accomplished scholar,<sup>71</sup> and, while he appreciated the poets, he showed peculiar aptitude for philosophy and history. But his development was precocious. His zeal for learning and the excessive ardour with which he devoted himself to physical exercises undermined his constitution. He became an invalid and died childless, after exhibiting to his court for many years an example of patience in sickness, and of dignified cheerfulness under the restraints of enforced inaction. His wife, Elizabetha Gonzaga, one of the most famous women of her age, was no less a pattern of noble conduct and serene contentment.

Such were the two last princes of the Montefeltro dynasty.<sup>72</sup> It is necessary to bear their virtues in mind while dwelling on the characteristics of Italian despotism in the fifteenth century. The Duchy of Urbino, both as an established dynasty not founded upon violence, and also as a centre of really humane culture, formed, it is true, an exception to the rule of Italian tyrannies: yet, if we omitted this state from our calculation, confining our attention to the extravagant iniquities of the Borgia family, or to the eccentricities of the Visconti, or to the dark crimes of the court of Naples, we should gain a false notion of the many-sided character of Italy, in which at that time vices and virtues were so strangely blended. We must never forget that the same society which produced a Filippo Maria Visconti, a Galeazzo Maria Sforza, a Sigismondo Malatesta, a Ferdinand of Aragon, gave birth

<sup>71</sup> It is not easy to say what a panegyrist of that period intended by 'a complete knowledge of Greek,' or 'fluent Greek writing,' in a prince. I suspect, however, that we ought not to understand by these phrases anything like a real familiarity with Greek literature, but rather such superficial knowledge as would enable a reader of Latin books to understand allusions and quotations. Poliziano, it may be remarked, thought it worth while to flatter Guidobaldo in a Greek epigram.

<sup>72</sup> After Guidobaldo's death the duchy was continued by the Della Rovere family, one of whom, Giovanni, Prefect of Rome and nephew of Sixtus IV., married the Duke's sister Giovanna in 1474.

also to a Lorenzo de' Medici and a Federigo da Montefeltro. It is only by studying the lives of all these men in combination that we can obtain a correct conception of the manifold personality, the mingled polish and barbarism, of the Italian Renaissance.

Some more detailed account of Baldassare Castiglione's treatise 'Il Cortegiano' will form a fitting conclusion to this Chapter on the Despots. It is true that his book was written later than the period we have been considering,<sup>73</sup> and he describes court life in its most graceful aspect. Yet all the antecedent history of the past two centuries had been gradually producing the conditions under which his courtier flourished; and the Italian of the Renaissance, as he appeared to the rest of Europe, was such a gentleman as he depicts. For the historian his book is of equal value in its own department with the 'Principe' of Machiavelli, the 'Autobiography' of Benvenuto Cellini, and the 'Diary' of Burchard.

In the opening of his 'Cortegiano' Castiglione introduces us to the court of Urbino—refined, chivalrous, witty, cultivated, gentle—confessedly the purest and most elevated court in Italy. He brings together the Duchess Elisabetta Gonzaga; Emilia Pia, wife of Antonio da Montefeltro, whose wit is as keen and active as that of Shakspeare's Beatrice; Pietro Bembo, the Ciceronian dictator of letters in the sixteenth century; Bernardo Bibbiena, Berni's patron, the author of 'Calandra,' whose portrait by Raphael in the Pitti enables us to estimate his innate love of humour; Giuliano de' Medici, Duke of Nemours, of whom the marble effigy by Michael Angelo still guards the tomb in San Lorenzo; together with other knights and gentlemen less known to fame—two Genoese Fregosi, Gasparo Pallavicini, Lodovico Count of Canossa, Cesare Gonzaga, l'Unico Aretino, and Fra Serafino the humourist. These ladies and gentleman hold discourse together, as was the custom of Urbino, in the drawing-room of the duchess during four consecutive evenings. The theme of their conversation is the Perfect Courtier. What must that man be who deserves the name of Cortegiano, and how must he conduct himself? The subject of discussion carries us at once into a bygone age. No one asks now what makes the perfect courtier; but in Italy in the Renaissance, owing to the changes from republican to despotic forms of government which we have traced in the foregoing pages, the question was one of the most serious importance. Culture

<sup>73</sup> It was written in 1514, and first published in folio by the Aldi of Venice in 1528. We find an English translation so early as 1561 by Thomas Hoby. At this time it was in the hands of all the gentlefolk of Europe. It is interesting to compare the *Cortegiano* with Della Casa's *Galateo* published in 1558. The *Galateo* professes to be a guide for gentlemen in social intercourse, and the minute rules laid down would satisfy the most exacting purist of the present century. In manners and their ethical analysis we have certainly gained nothing during the last three centuries. The principle upon which these precepts of conduct are founded is not etiquette or fashion, but respect for the sensibilities of others. It would be difficult to compose a more philosophical treatise on the lesser duties imposed upon us by the conditions of society—such minute matters as the proper way to blow the nose or use the napkin being referred to the one rule of acting so as to cause no inconvenience to our neighbours.

and good breeding, the amenities of intercourse, the pleasures of the intellect, scarcely existed outside the sphere of courts; for one effect of the Revival of Learning had been to make the acquisition of polite knowledge difficult, and the proletariat was less cultivated then than in the age of Dante. Men of ambition who desired to acquire a reputation whether as soldiers or as poets, as politicians or as orators, came to court and served their chosen prince in war or at the council-table, or even in humbler offices of state. To be able, therefore, to conduct himself with dignity, to know how to win the favour of his master and to secure the goodwill of his peers, to retain his personal honour and to make himself respected without being hated, to inspire admiration and to avoid envy, to outshine all honourable rivals in physical exercises and the craft of arms, to maintain a creditable equipage and retinue, to be instructed in the arts of polite intercourse, to converse with ease and wit, to be at home alike in the tilting yard, the banquet-hall, the boudoir, and the council-chamber, to understand diplomacy, to live before the world and yet to keep a fitting privacy and distance—these and a hundred other matters were the climax and perfection of the culture of a gentleman. Courts being now the only centres in which it was possible for a man of birth and talents to shine, it followed that the perfect courtier and the perfect gentleman were synonymous terms. Castiglione's treatise may therefore be called an essay on the character of the true gentleman as he appeared in Italy. Eliminating all qualities that are special to any art or calling, he defines those essential characteristics which were requisite for social excellence in the sixteenth century. It is curious to observe how unchangeable are the laws of real politeness and refinement. Castiglione's courtier is, with one or two points of immaterial difference, a modern gentleman, such as all men of education at the present day would wish to be.

The first requisite in the ideal courtier is that he must be noble. The Count of Canossa, who proposed the subject of the debate, lays down this as an axiom. Gaspar Pallavicino denies the necessity.<sup>74</sup> But after

<sup>74</sup> Italy, earlier than any other European nation, developed theoretical democracy. Dante had defined true nobility to consist of personal excellence in a man or in his ancestors; he also called 'nobilita' sister of 'filosofia.' Poggio in his Dialogue *De Nobilitate*, into which he introduces Niccolò Niccoli and Lorenzo de' Medici (Cosimo's brother), decided that only merit constitutes true nobility. Hawking and hunting are far less noble occupations than agriculture; descent from a long line of historic criminals is no honour. French and English castle-life, and the robber-knighthood of Germany, he argues, are barbarous. Lorenzo pleads the authority of Aristotle in favour of noble blood; Poggio contests the passage quoted, and shows the superiority of the Latin word 'nobilitas' (distinction) over the Greek term *εὐγένεια* (good birth). The several kinds of aristocracy in Italy are then discussed. In Naples the nobles despise business and idle their time away. In Rome they manage their estates. In Venice and Genoa they engage in commerce. In Florence they either take to mercantile pursuits or live upon the produce of their land in idleness. The whole way of looking at the subject betrays a liberal and scientific spirit, wholly free from prejudice. Machiavelli (*Discorsi*, i. 55) is very severe on the aristocracy, whom he defines as 'those who live in idleness on the produce of their estates, without applying themselves to agriculture or to any other useful occupation.' He points out that the Venetian nobles are not

a lively discussion, his opinion is overruled, on the ground that, although the gentle virtues may be found among people of obscure origin, yet a man who intends to be a courtier must start with the prestige of noble birth. Next he must be skilful in the use of weapons and courageous in the battle-field. He is not, however, bound to have the special science of a general, nor must he in times of peace profess unique devotion to the art of war: that would argue a coarseness of nature and vainglory. Again, he must excel in all manly sports and exercises, so as, if possible, to beat the actual professors of each game or feat of skill on their own ground. Yet here also he should avoid mere habits of display, which are unworthy of a man who aspires to be a gentleman and not an athlete. Another indispensable quality is gracefulness in all he does and says. In order to secure this elegance, he must beware of every form of affectation: 'Let him shun affectation, as though it were a most perilous rock; and let him seek in everything a certain carelessness, to hide his art, and show that what he says or does comes from him without effort or deliberation.' This vice of affectation in all its kinds, and the ways of avoiding it, are discussed with a delicacy of insight which would do credit to a Chesterfield of the present century, sending forth his son into society for the first time. Castiglione goes so far as to condemn the pedantry of far-fetched words and the coxcombry of elaborate costumes, as dangerous forms of affectation. His courtier must speak and write with force and freedom. He need not be a purist in his use of language, but may use such foreign phrases and modern idioms as are current in good society, aiming only at simplicity and clearness. He must add to excellence in arms polite culture in letters and sound scholarship, avoiding that barbarism of the French, who think it impossible to be a good soldier and an accomplished student at the same time. Yet his learning should be always held in reserve, to give brilliancy and flavour to his wit, and not brought forth for merely erudite parade. He must have a practical acquaintance with music and dancing; it would be well for him to sing and touch various stringed instruments, so as to relax his own spirits and to make himself agreeable to ladies. If he can compose verses and sing them to his own accompaniment, so much the better. Finally, he ought to understand the arts of painting and sculpture; for criticism, even though a man be neither poet nor artist, is an elegant accomplishment. Such are the principal qualities of the Cortegiano.

The precepts which are laid down for the use of his acquirements and properly so called, since they are merchants. The different districts of Italy had widely different conceptions of nobility. Naples was always aristocratic, owing to its connection with France and Spain. Ferrara maintained the chivalry of courts. Those states, on the other hand, which had been democratised, like Florence, by republican customs, or like Milan, by despotism, set less value on birth than on talent and wealth. It was not until the age of the Spanish ascendancy (latter half of sixteenth century) that Cosimo I. withdrew the young Florentines from their mercantile pursuits and enrolled them in his order of S. Stephen, and that the patricians of Genoa carried daggers inscribed 'for the chastisement of villeins.'

general conduct resolve themselves into a strong recommendation of tact and caution. The courtier must study the nature of his prince, and show the greatest delicacy in approaching him, so as to secure his favour, and to avoid wearying him with importunities. In tendering his advice he must be modest; but he should make a point of never sacrificing his own liberty of judgment. To obey his master in dishonourable things would be a derogation from his dignity; and if he discovers any meanness in the character of the prince, it is better to quit his service.<sup>75</sup> A courtier must be careful to create beforehand a favourable opinion of himself in places he intends to visit. Much stress is laid upon his choice of clothes and the equipment of his servants. In these respects he should aim at combining individuality with simplicity so as to produce an impression of novelty without extravagance or eccentricity. He must be very cautious in his friendships, selecting his associates with care, and admitting only one or two to intimacy.

In connection with the general subject of tact and taste, the Cardinal Bibbiena introduces an elaborate discussion of the different sorts of jokes, which proves the high value attached in Italy to all displays of wit. It appears that even practical jokes were not considered in bad taste, but that irreverence and grossness were tabooed as boorish. Mere obscenity is especially condemned, though it must be admitted that many jests approved of at that time would now appear intolerable. But the essential point to be aimed at then, as now, was the promotion of mirth by cleverness, and not by mere tricks and clumsy inventions.

In bringing this chapter on Italian Despotism in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries to a conclusion, it will be well to cast a backward glance over the ground which has been traversed. A great internal change took place and was accomplished during this period. The free burghs which flourished in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries gave place to tyrannies, illegal for the most part in their origin, and maintained by force. In the absence of dynastic right, violence and craft were instruments by means of which the Despots founded and preserved their power. Yet the sentiments of the Italians at large were not unfavourable to the growth of principalities. On the contrary, the forces which move society, the inner instinct of the nation, and the laws of progress and development, tended year by year more surely to the consolidation of despotisms. City after city lost its faculty for self-government, until at last Florence, so long the centre of political freedom, fell beneath the yoke of her merchant princes. It is difficult for the historian not to feel either a monarchical or a republican bias. Yet this internal and gradual revolution in the states of Italy may be re-

<sup>75</sup> From many passages in the *Cortegiano* it is clear that Castiglione is painting the character of an independent gentleman, to whom self-culture in all humane excellence is of far more importance than the acquisition of the art of pleasing. Circumstances made the life of courts the best obtainable; but there is no trace of French 'ceil-de-bœuf' servility.

garded neither as a matter for exultation in the cause of sovereignty, nor for lamentation over the decay of liberty. It was but part of an inevitable process which the Italians shared, according to the peculiarities of their condition, in common with the rest of Europe.

In tracing the history of the Visconti and the Sforzas our attention has been naturally directed to the private and political vices of the Despot. As a contrast to so much violence and treachery, we have studied the character of one of the best princes produced in this period. Yet it must be borne in mind that the Duke of Urbino was far less representative of his class than Francesco Sforza, and that the aims and actions of Gian Galeazzo Visconti formed the ideal to which an Italian prince of spirit, if he had the opportunity, aspired. The history of art and literature in this period belongs to another branch of the inquiry; and a separate chapter must be devoted to the consideration of political morality as theorised by the Italians at the end of these two centuries of intrigue. But having insisted on the violence and vices of the tyrants, it seemed necessary to close the review of their age by describing the Italian nobleman as court-life made him. Castiglione shows him at the very best: the darker shadows of the picture are omitted; the requirements of the most finished culture and the tone of the purest society in Italy are depicted with the elegance of a scholar and the taste of a true gentleman. The fact remains that the various influences at work in Italy during the age of the Despots had rendered the conception of this ideal possible. Nowhere else in Europe could a portrait of so much dignity and sweetness, combining the courage of a soldier with the learning of a student and the accomplishment of an artist, the liberality of freedom with the courtesies of service, have been painted from the life and been recognised as the model which all members of polite society should imitate. Nobler characters and more heroic virtues might have been produced by the Italian commonwealths if they had continued to enjoy their ancient freedom of self-government. Meanwhile we must render this justice to Italian despotism, that beneath its shadow was developed the type of modern gentleman.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE REPUBLICS

*The different Physiognomies of the Italian Republics—The Similarity of their Character as Municipalities—The Rights of Citizenship—Causes of Disturbance in the Commonwealths—Belief in the Plasticity of Constitutions—Example of Genoa—Savonarola's Constitution—Machiavelli's Discourse to Leo X.—Complexity of Interests and Factions—Example of Siena—Small Size of Italian Cities—Mutual Mistrust and Jealousy of the Commonwealths—The notable Exception of Venice—Constitution of Venice—Her Wise System of Government—Contrast of Florentine Vicissitudes—The Magistracies of Florence—Balìa and Parlamento—The Arts of the Medici—Comparison of Venice and Florence in respect to Intellectual Activity and Mobility—Parallels between Greece and Italy—Essential Differences—The Mercantile Character of Italian Burghs—The 'Trattato del Governo della Famiglia'—The Bourgeois Tone of Florence, and the Ideal of a Burgher—Mercenary Arms.*

THE despotisms of Italy present the spectacle of states founded upon force, controlled and moulded by the will of princes, whose object in each case has been to maintain usurped power by means of mercenary arms and to deprive the people of political activity. Thus the Italian principalities, however they may differ in their origin, the character of their administration, or their relation to Church and Empire, all tend to one type. The egotism of the Despot, conscious of his selfish aims and deliberate in their execution, formed the motive principle in all alike.

The republics on the contrary are distinguished by strongly marked characteristics. The history of each is the history of the development of certain specific qualities, which modified the type of municipal organisation common to them all. Their differences consist chiefly in the varying forms which institutions of a radically similar design assumed, and also in those peculiar local conditions which made the Venetians Levant merchants, the Perugians captains of adventure, the Genoese admirals and pirates, the Florentines bankers, and so forth. Each commonwealth contracted a certain physiognomy through the prolonged action of external circumstances and by the maintenance of some political predilection. Thus Siena, excluded from maritime commerce by its situation, remained, broadly speaking, faithful to the Ghibelline party; while Perugia at the distance of a few miles, equally debarred from mercantile expansion, maintained the Guelf cause with pertinacity. The annals of the one city record a long succession of complicated party quarrels, throughout the course of which the State continued free; the Guelf leanings of the other exposed it to the gradual encroachment of



the Popes, while its civic independence was imperilled and enfeebled by the contests of a few noble families. Lucca and Pistoja in like manner are strongly contrasted, the latter persisting in a state of feud and faction which delivered it bound hand and foot to Florence, the former after many vicissitudes attaining internal quiet under the dominion of a narrow oligarchy.

But while recognising these differences, which manifest themselves partly in what may be described as national characteristics, and partly in constitutional varieties, we may trace one course of historical progression in all except Venice. This is what natural philosophers might call the morphology of Italian commonwealths. To begin with, the Italian republics were all municipalities. That is, like the Greek states, they consisted of a small body of burghers, who alone had the privileges of government, together with a larger population, who, though they paid taxes and shared the commercial and social advantages of the city, had no voice in its administration. Citizenship was hereditary in those families by whom it had been once acquired, each republic having its own criterion of the right, and guarding it jealously against the encroachments of non-qualified persons. In Florence, for example, the burgher must belong to one of the Arts.<sup>1</sup> In Venice his name must be inscribed upon the Golden Book. The rivalries to which this system of municipal government gave rise were a chief source of internal weakness to the commonwealths. Nor did the burghers see far enough or philosophically enough to recruit their numbers by a continuous admission of new members from the wealthy but unfranchised citizens.<sup>2</sup> This alone could have saved them from the death by dwindling and decay to which they were exposed. The Italian conception of citizenship may be set forth in the words of one of their acutest critics, Donato Giannotti, who writes concerning the electors in a state:<sup>3</sup> 'Non dico tutti gli abitanti della terra, ma tutti quelli che hanno grado; cioè che hanno acquistato, o eglino o gli antichi loro, facultà d'ottenere i magistrati; e in somma che sono *participes imperandi et parendi*.' No Italian had any notion of representative government in our sense of the term. The problem was always how to put the administration of the state most conveniently into the hands of the fittest among those who were qualified as burghers, and how to give each burgher his due share in the

<sup>1</sup> Villari, *Life of Savonarola*, vol. i. p. 259, may be consulted concerning the further distinction of Benefiziati, Statali, Aggravazzati, at Florence. See also Varchi, vol. i. pp. 165-70. Consult Appendix ii.

<sup>2</sup> It must be mentioned that a provision for admitting deserving individuals to citizenship formed part of the Florentine Constitution of 1495. The principle was not, however, recognised at large by the republics.

<sup>3</sup> On the Government of Siena (vol. i. p. 351 of his collected works): 'I say not all the inhabitants of the state, but all those who have rank; that is, who have acquired, either in their own persons or through their ancestors, the right of taking magistracy, in short those who are *participes imperandi et parendi*.' What has already been said in Chapter II. about the origin of the Italian Republics will explain this definition of burghership.



government; not how to select men delegated from the whole population. The wisest among their philosophical politicians sought to establish a mixed constitution, which should combine the advantages of principality, aristocracy, and democracy. Starting with the fact that the eligible burghers numbered some 5,000, and with the assumption that among these the larger portion would be content with freedom and a voice in the administration, while a certain body were ambitious of honourable distinctions, and a few aspired to the pomp of titular presidency, they thought that these several desires might be satisfied and reconciled in a republic composed of a general assembly of the citizens, a select Senate, and a Doge. In these theories the influence of Aristotelian studies<sup>4</sup> and the example of Venice are apparent. At the same time it is noticeable that no account whatever is taken of the remaining 95,000 who contributed their wealth and industry to the prosperity of the city.<sup>5</sup> The theory of the State rests upon no abstract principle like that of the divine right of the Empire, which determined Dante's speculation in the Middle Ages, or that of the divine right of kings, with which we Englishmen were made familiar in the seventeenth century, or that again of the rights of men, on which the democracies of France and America were founded. The right contemplated by the Italian politicians is that of the burghers to rule the commonwealth for their advantage. As a matter of fact, Venice was the only Italian republic which maintained this kind of oligarchy with success through centuries of internal tranquillity. The rest were exposed to a series of revolutions which ended at last in their enslavement.

Intolerant of foreign rule, and blinded by the theoretical supremacy of the Empire to the need of looking beyond its own municipal institutions, each city in the twelfth century sought to introduce such a system into the already existing machinery of the burgh as should secure

<sup>4</sup> It would be very interesting to trace in detail the influence of Aristotle's *Politics* upon the practical and theoretical statists of the Renaissance. The whole of Gianotti's works; the discourses of de' Pazzi, Vettori, Acciaiuoli, and the two Guicciardini on the State of Florence (*Arch. St. It.* vol. i.); and Machiavelli's *Discorso sul Reggimento di Firenze*, addressed to Leo X., illustrate in general the working of Aristotelian ideals. At Florence, in 1495, Savonarola urged his Constitution on the burghers by appeals to Aristotle's doctrine and to the example of Venice [see Segni, p. 15, and compare the speeches of Pagolo Antonio Soderini and Guido Antonio Vespucci, in Guicciardini's *Istoria d' Italia*, vol. ii. p. 155 of Rosini's edition, on the same occasion]. Segni, p. 86, mentions a speech of Pier Filippo Pandolfine, the arguments of which, he says, were drawn from Aristotle and illustrated by Florentine history. The Italian doctrinaires seem to have imagined that, by clever manipulation of existing institutions, they could construct a state similar to that called *πολιτεία* by Aristotle, in which all sections of the community should be fairly represented. Venice, meanwhile, was a practical instance of the possible prosperity of such a constitution with a strong oligarchical complexion.

<sup>5</sup> These numbers, 100,000 for the population, and 5,000 for the burghers, are stated roundly. In Florence, when the Consiglio Maggiore was opened in 1495, it was found that the Florentines altogether numbered about 90,000, while the qualified burghers were not more than 3,200. In 1581 the population of Venice numbered 134,890, whereof 1,843 were adult patricians [see below, p. 106].

its independence and place the government in the hands of its citizens. But the passing of bad laws, or the non-observance of wise regulations, or, again, the passions of individuals and parties, soon disturbed the equilibrium established in these little communities. Desire for more power than their due prompted one section of the burghers to violence. The love of independence or simple insubordination, drove another portion to resistance. Matters were further complicated by resident or neighbouring nobles. Then followed the wars of factions, proscriptions, and exiles. Having banished their rivals, the party in power for the time being remodelled the institutions of the republic to suit their own particular interest. Meanwhile the opposition in exile fomented every element of discontent within the city, which this short-sighted policy was sure to foster. Sudden revolutions were the result, attended in most cases by massacres consequent upon the victorious return of the outlaws. To the action of these peccant humours—*umori* is the word applied by the elder Florentine historians to the trouble attendant upon factions—must be added the jealousy of neighbouring cities, the cupidity of intriguing princes, the partisanship of the Guelfs and Ghibellines, the treason and the egotism of mercenary generals, and the false foreign policy which led the Italians to rely for aid on France or Germany or Spain. Little by little, under the prolonged action of these disturbing forces, each republic in turn became weaker, more confused in policy, more mistrustful of itself and its own citizens, more subdivided into petty but ineradicable factions, until at last it fell a prey either to some foreign potentate, or to the Church, or else to an ambitious family among its members. The small scale of the Italian commonwealths, taken singly, favoured rapid change, and gave an undue value to distinguished wealth or unscrupulous ability among the burghers. The oscillation between democracy and aristocracy and back again, the repetition of exhausting discords, and the demoralising influences of occasional despotism, so broke the spirit of each commonwealth that in the end the citizens forgot their ancient zeal for liberty, and were glad to accept tyranny for the sake of the protection it professed to extend to life and property.

To these vicissitudes all the republics of Italy, with the exception of Venice, were subject. In like manner, they shared in common the belief that constitutions could be made at will, that the commonwealth was something plastic, capable of taking the complexion and the form impressed upon it by speculative politicians. So firmly rooted was this conviction, and so highly self-conscious had the statesmen of Italy become, partly by the experience of their shifting history, and partly by their study of antiquity, that the idea of the State as something possessed of organic vitality can scarcely be said to have existed among them. The principle of gradual growth, which gives its value, for example, to the English Constitution, was not recognised by the Italians. Nor again had their past history taught them the necessity, so well divined and recognised by the Greek statesmen, of maintaining a fixed

character at any cost in republics, which, in spite of their small scale, aspired to permanence.<sup>6</sup> The most violent and arbitrary changes which the speculative faculty of a theorist could contrive, or which the prejudices of a party could impose, seemed to them not only possible but natural.

A very notable instance of this tendency to treat the State as a plastic product of political ingenuity is afforded by the annals of Genoa. After suffering for centuries from the vicissitudes common to all Italian free cities—discords between the Guelph and Ghibelline factions, between the nobles and the people, between the enfranchised citizens and the proletariat—after submitting to the rule of foreign masters, especially of France and Milan, and after being torn in pieces by the rival houses of Adorni and Fregosi, the Genoese at last received liberty from the hands of Andrea Doria in 1528. They then proceeded to form a new Constitution for the protection of their freedom; and in order to destroy the memory of the old parties which had caused their ruin, they obliterated all their family names with the exception of twenty, under one or other of which the whole body of citizens were bound to enroll themselves.<sup>7</sup> This was nothing less than an attempt to create new *gentes* by effacing the distinctions established by nature and tradition. To parallel a scheme so artificial in its method, we must go back to the history of Sicyon and the changes wrought in the Dorian tribes by Cleisthenes.

Short of such violent expedients as these, the whole history of towns like Florence reveals a succession of similar attempts. When, for example, the Medici had been expelled in 1494, the Florentines found themselves without a working constitution, and proceeded to frame one. The matter was at first referred to two eminent jurists, Guido Antonio Vespucci and Paolo Antonio Soderini, who argued for and against the establishment of a Grand Council on the Venetian model, before the Signory in the Palazzo. At this juncture Savonarola in his Sermon for the third Sunday in Advent<sup>8</sup> suggested that each of the sixteen Companies should form a plan, that these be submitted to the Gonfaloniers, who should choose the four best, and that from these four the Signory should select the most perfect. At the same time he pronounced himself in favour of an imitation of the Venetian Consiglio Grande. His scheme, as is known, was adopted.<sup>9</sup> Running through

<sup>6</sup> The value of the *ἥθος* was not wholly unrecognised by political theorists. Giannotti (vol. i. p. 160, and vol. ii. p. 13), for example, translates it by the word 'temperamento.'

<sup>7</sup> See Varchi, *St. F.* lib. vii. cap. 8.

<sup>8</sup> December 12, 1494.

<sup>9</sup> Segni (pp. 15, 16) says that Savonarola deserved to be honoured for this Constitution by the Florentines no less than Numa by the Romans. Varchi (vol. i. p. 169) judges the Consiglio Grande to have been the only good institution ever adopted by the Florentines. We may compare Giannotti (*Sopra la Repubblica di Siena*, p. 346) for a similar opinion. Guicciardini, both in the *Storia d' Italia* and the *Storia di Firenze*

the whole political writings of the Florentine philosophers and historians, we find the same belief in artificial and arbitrary alterations of the state. Machiavelli pronounces his opinion that, in spite of the corruption of Florence, a wise legislator might effect her salvation.<sup>10</sup> Skill alone was needed. There lay the wax; the scientific artist had only to set to his hand and model it.

This is the dominant thought which pervades his treatise on the right ordering of the State of Florence addressed to Leo X.<sup>11</sup> A more consummate piece of political mechanism than that devised by Machiavelli in this essay can hardly be imagined. It is like a clock with separate actions for hours, minutes, seconds, and the revolutions of the moons and planets. All the complicated interests of parties and classes in the state, the traditional pre-eminence of the Medicean family, the rights of the Church, and the relation of Florence to foreign powers, have been carefully considered and provided for. The defect of this consummate work of art is that it remained a mere machine, devised to meet the exigencies of the moment, and powerless against such perturbations as the characters and passions of living men must introduce into the working of a Commonwealth. Had Florence been a colony established in a new country with no neighbours but savages, or had it been an institution protected from without against the cupidity of selfish rivals, then such a constitution might have been imposed on it with profit. But to expect that a city dominated by ancient prejudices, connected by a thousand subtle ties not only with the rest of Italy but also with the states of Europe, and rotten to the core in many of its most important members could be restored to pristine vigour by a doctrinaire, however able, was chimerical. The course of events contradicted this vain expectation. Meanwhile a few clear-headed and positive observers were dimly conscious of the instability of merely speculative constitution-making. Varchi, in a weighty passage on the defects of the Florentine republic, points out that its weakness arose partly from the violence of factions, but also in a great measure from the

gives to Savonarola the whole credit of having passed this Constitution. Nardi and Pitti might be cited to the same effect. None of these critics doubts for a moment that what was theoretically best ought to have been found practical y feasible

<sup>10</sup> *St. Fior.* lib. iii. r: 'Firenze a quel grado è pervenuta che facilmente da uno savio dador di leggi potrebbe essere in qualunque forma di governo riord'nata.'

<sup>11</sup> The language of this treatise is noteworthy. After discoursing on the differences between republics and principalities, and showing that Florence is more suited to the former, and Milan to the latter, form of government, he says: 'Ma perchè fare principato dove starebbe bene repubblica,' etc. . . . 'si perchè Firenze è subietto altissimo di pigliare questa forma,' etc. The phrases in italics show how thoroughly Machiavelli regarded the commonwealth as plastic. We may compare the who e of Guicciardini's elaborate essay 'Del Reggimento di Firenze' (*Op. Ined.* vol. ii.), as well as the 'Discourses' addressed by Alessandro de' Pazzi, Francesco Vettori, Ruberto Acciaiuoli, Francesco Guicciardini, and Luigi Guicciardini, to the Cardinal Giulio de' Medici, on the settlement of the Florentine Constitution in 1522 (*Arch. Stor.* vol. i.). Not one of these men doubted that his nostrum would effect the cure of the republic undermined by slow consumption.

implicit faith reposed in doctors of the law.<sup>12</sup> The history of the Florentine Constitution, he says, is the history of changes effected by successions of mutually hostile parties, each in its own interest subverting the work of its predecessor, and each in turn relying on the theories of jurists, who without practical genius for politics make arbitrary rules for the control of state affairs. Yet even Varchi shares the prevailing conviction that the proper method is first to excogitate a perfect political system, and then to impress that like a stamp upon the material of the commonwealth. His criticism is directed against lawyers, not against philosophers and practical diplomatists.

In this sense and to this extent were the republics of Italy the products of constructive skill; and great was the political sagacity educes among the Italians by this state of things. The citizens reflected on the past, compared their institutions with those of neighbouring states, studied antiquity, and applied the whole of their intelligence to the one aim of giving a certain defined form to the commonwealth. Prejudice and passion distorted their schemes, and each successive modification of the government was apt to have a merely temporary object. Thus the republics, as I have already hinted, lacked that safeguard which the Greek states gained by clinging each to its own character. The Greeks were no less self-conscious in their political practice and philosophy: but after the age of the Nomothetæ, when they had experienced nearly every phase through which a commonwealth can pass, they recognised the importance of maintaining the traditional character of their constitutions inviolate. Sparta adhered with singular tenacity to the code of Lycurgus; and the Athenians, while they advanced from step to step in the development of a democracy, were bent on realising the ideal they had set before them.

Religion, which in Greece, owing to its local and genealogical character, was favourable to this stability, proved in Italy one of the most potent causes of disorder. The Greek city grew up under the protection of a local deity, whose blood had been transmitted in many instances to the chief families of the burgh. This ancestral god gave the independence and autonomy to the state; and when the Nomothetes appeared, he was understood to have interpreted and formulated the inherent law that animated the body politic. Thus the commonwealth was a divinely founded and divinely directed organism, self-sufficing, with no dependence upon foreign sanction, with no question of its right. The Italian cities, on the contrary, derived their law from the common *jus* of the Imperial system, their religion from the common fount of Christianity. They could not forget their origin, wrung with difficulty from existing institutions which preceded them and which still remained ascendent in the world of civilised humanity. The self-reliant autonomy of a Greek state, owing allegiance only to its protective deity and its inherent *Nomos*, had no parallel in Italy outside Venice. All

<sup>12</sup> *St. Fior.* lib. vi. cap. 4; vol. i. p. 294.

the other republics were conscious of dependence on external power, and regarded themselves as *ab initio* artificial rather than natural creations.

Long before a true constitutional complexion had been given to any Italian state but Venice, parties had sprung up, and taken such firm root that the subsequent history of the republics was the record of their factions. To this point I have already alluded; but it is too important to be passed by without further illustration. The great division of Guelph and Ghibelline introduced a vital discord into each section of the people, by establishing two antagonistic theories respecting the right of supreme government. Then followed subordinate quarrels of the nobles with the townsfolk, schisms between the wealthier and poorer burghers, jealousies of the artisans and merchants, and factions for one or other eminent family. These different elements of discord succeed each other with astonishing rapidity; and as each gives place to another, it leaves a portion of its mischief rankling in the body politic, until at last there remains no possibility of self-government.<sup>13</sup> The history of Florence, or Genoa, or Pistoja would supply us with ample illustrations of each of these obstacles to the formation of a solid political temperament. But Siena furnishes perhaps the best example of the extent to which such feuds could disturb a state. The way in which this city conducted its government for a long course of years justified Varchi in calling it 'a jumble, so to speak, and chaos of republics rather than a well-ordered and disciplined commonwealth.'<sup>14</sup> The discords of Siena were wholly internal. They proceeded from the wrangling of five successive factions, or *Monti*, as the people of Siena called them. The first of these was termed the *Monte de' Nobili*; for Siena, like all Italian free burghs, had originally been controlled by certain noble families, who formed the people and excluded the other citizens from offices of states. In course of time the plebeians acquired wealth, and the nobles split into parties among themselves. To such a pitch were the quarrels of these nobles carried, that at last they found it impossible to conduct the government, and agreed to relinquish it for a season to nine plebeian families chosen from among the richest and most influential. This gave rise to the *Monte de' Nove*, who were supposed to hold the city in commission for the nobles, while the latter devoted themselves to the prosecution of their private animosities. Weakened by feuds, the patricians fell a prey to their own creatures, the *Monte de' Nove*, who in their turn ruled Siena like oligarchs, refusing to give up the power which had been entrusted to them. In time, however, their insolence became insufferable. The populace rebelled, deposed the *Nove*, and invested with supreme authority twelve other families of

<sup>13</sup> Machiavelli, in spite of his love of freedom, says (*St. Fior.* lib. vii. 1): 'Coloro che sperano che una repubblica possa essere unita, assai di questa speranza s' ingannano.'

<sup>14</sup> Vol. i. pp. 324-30. See, too, Segni, p. 213, and Gianotti, vol. i. p. 341. De Comines describes Siena thus: 'La ville est de tout tempts en partialité, et se gouverne plus follement que ville d'Italie.'

mixed origin. The *Monte de' Dodici*, created after this fashion, ran nearly the same course as their predecessors, except that they appear to have administered the city equitably. Getting tired of this form of government, the people next superseded them by sixteen men, chosen from the dregs of the plebeians, who assumed the title of *Riformatori*. This new *Monte de' Sedici* or *de' Riformatori* showed much integrity in their management of affairs, but, as is the wont of red republicans, they were not averse to bloodshed. Their cruelty caused the people, with the help of the surviving patrician houses, together with the *Nove* and the *Dodici*, to rise and shake them off. The last governing body formed in this diabolical five-part fugue of crazy statecraft received the name of *Monte del Popolo*, because it included all who were then eligible to the Great Council of the State. Yet the factions of the elder *Monti* still survived; and to what extent they had absorbed the population may be gathered from the fact that, on the defeat of the *Riformatori*, 4,500 of the Sienese were exiled. It must be borne in mind that with the creation of each new *Monte* a new party formed itself in the city, and the traditions of these parties were handed down from generation to generation. At last in the beginning of the sixteenth century, Pandolfo Petrucci, who belonged to the *Monte de' Nove*, made himself in reality, if not in name, the master of Siena, and the Duke of Florence later on in the same century extended his dominion over the republic.<sup>15</sup> There is something almost grotesque in the bare recital of these successive factions; yet we must remember that beneath their dry names they conceal all elements of class and party discord.

What rendered the growth of parties still more pernicious, as already mentioned, was the smallness of Italian republics. Varchi reckoned 10,000 *fuochi* in Florence, 50,000 *bocche* of seculars, and 20,000 *bocche* of religious. According to Zuccagni Orlandini there were 90,000 Florentines in 1495, of whom only 3,200 were burghers. Venice, according to Gianotti, counted at about the same period 20,000 *fuochi*, each of which supplied the state with two men fit to bear arms. These calculations, though obviously rough and based upon no accurate returns, show that a republic of 100,000 souls, of whom 5,000 should be citizens, would have taken distinguished rank among Italian cities.<sup>16</sup> In a state of this size, divided by feuds of every kind, from the highest political antagonism down to the meanest personal antipathy, changes were very easily effected. The slightest disturbance of the equilibrium in any quarter made itself felt throughout the city.<sup>17</sup> The opinions of

<sup>15</sup> Siena capitulated, in 1555, to the Spanish troops, who resigned it to Duke Cosmo I. in 1557.

<sup>16</sup> It may be worth while to compare the accurate return of the Venetian population in 1581 furnished by Yriarte (*Vie d'un Patricien de Venise*, p. 96). The whole number of the inhabitants was 134,600. Of these 1,843 were adult patricians; 4,309 women and children of the patrician class; Cittadini of all ages and both sexes, 3,553; monks, nuns, and priests, 3,969; Jews 1,043; beggars, 187.

<sup>17</sup> We might mention, as famous instances, the Neri and Bianchi factions introduced into Pistoja in 1296 by a quarrel of the Cancellieri family, the dismemberment of Flor-



each burgher were known and calculated. Individuals, by their wealth, their power of aiding or of suppressing poorer citizens, and the force of their personal ability, acquired a perilous importance. At Florence the political balance was so nicely adjusted that the ringing of the great bell in the Palazzo meant a revolution and to raise the cry of *Palle* in the streets was tantamount to an outbreak in the Medicean interest. To call *Popolo e libertà* was nothing less than a riot punishable by law. Segni tells how Jacopino Alamanni, having used these words near the statue of David on the Piazza in a personal quarrel, was beheaded for it the same day.<sup>18</sup> The secession of three or four families from one faction to another altered the political situation of a whole republic, and led perhaps to the exile of a sixth part of the enfranchised population.<sup>19</sup> After this would follow the intrigues of the outlaws eager to return, including negotiations with lukewarm party-leaders in the city, alliances with hostile states, and contracts which comprised the future conduct of the commonwealth in the interest of a few revengeful citizens. The biographies of such men as Cosimo de' Medici the elder and Filippo Strozzi throw the strongest light upon these delicacies and complexities of party politics in Florence.

In addition to the evils of internal factions we must reckon all the sources of mutual mistrust to which the republics were exposed. As the Italians had no notion of representative government, so they never conceived a confederation. The thirst for autonomy in each state was as great as of old among the cities of Greece. To be independent of a sister republic, though such freedom were bought at the price of the tyranny of a native family, was the first object of every commonwealth. At the same time this passion for independence was only equalled by the greed of foreign usurpation. The second object of each republic was to extend its power at the expense of its neighbours. As Pisa swallowed Amalfi, so Genoa destroyed Pisa, and Venice did her best to cripple Genoa. Florence obliterated the rival burgh of Semifonte, and Milan twice reduced Piacenza to a wilderness. The notion that the great maritime powers of Italy or the leading cities of Lombardy should permanently cooperate for a common purpose was never for a moment entertained. Such leagues as were formed were understood to be temporary. When their immediate object had been gained, the members returned to their old local rivalries. Milan, when, on the occasion of Filippo Maria Visconti's death, she had a chance of freedom, refused to recognise the liberties of the Lombard cities, and fell a prey to

ence in 1215 by a feud between the Buondelmonti and Amidei, the tragedy of Imelda Lambertazzi, which upset Bologna in 1273, the student riot which nearly delivered Bologna into the hands of Roméo de' Pepoli in 1321, the whole action of the Strozzi family at the period of the extinction of Florentine liberty, the petty jealousies of the Cerchi and Donati detailed by Dino Compagni, in 1294.

<sup>18</sup> Segni, *St. Fior.* p. 53.

<sup>19</sup> As an instance, take what Marco Foscarini reported in 1527 to the Venetian Senate respecting the parties in Florence (*Rel. Ven.* série ii. vol. i. p. 70). The *Compagnacci*, one of the three great parties, only numbered 800 persons.

Francesco Sforza. Florence, under the pernicious policy of Cosimo de' Medici, helped to enslave Milan and Bologna instead of entering into a republican league against their common foes, the tyrants. Pisa, Arezzo, and the other subject cities of Tuscany were treated by her with such selfish harshness that they proved her chiefest peril in the hour of need.<sup>20</sup> Competition in commerce increased the mutual hatred of the free burghs. States like Venice, Florence, Pisa, Genoa, depending for their existence upon mercantile wealth, and governed by men of business, took every opportunity they could of ruining a rival in the market. So mean and narrow was the spirit of Italian policy that no one accounted it unpatriotic or dishonourable for Florence to suck the very life out of Pisa, or for Venice to strangle a competitor so dangerous as Genoa.

Thus the jealousy of state against state, of party against party, and of family against family, held Italy in perpetual disunion; while diplomatic habits were contracted which rendered the adoption of any simple policy impossible. When the time came for the Italians to cope with the great nations of Europe, the republics of Venice, Genoa, Milan, Florence ought to have been leagued together and supported by the weight of the Papal authority. They might then have stood against the world. Instead of that, these cities presented nothing but mutual rancours, hostilities, and jealousies to the common enemy. Moreover, the Italians were so used to petty intrigues and to a system of balance of power within the peninsula, that they could not comprehend the magnitude of the impending danger. It was difficult for a politician of the Renaissance, accustomed to the small theatre of Italian diplomacy, schooled in the traditions of Lorenzo de' Medici, swayed in his calculations by the old pretensions of Pope and Emperor, dominated by the dread of Venice, Milan, and Naples, and as yet but dimly conscious of the true force of France or Spain, to conceive that absolutely the only chance of Italy lay in union at any cost and under any form. Machiavelli indeed seems too late to have discerned this truth. But he had been lessoned by events, which rendered the realisation of his cherished schemes impossible; nor could he find a Prince powerful enough to attempt his Utopia. Of the Republics he had abandoned all hope.

To the laws which governed the other republics of Italy, Venice offered in many respects a notable exception. Divided from the rest of Italy by the lagoons, and directed by her commerce to the Eastern shores of the Mediterranean, Venice took no part in the factions which rent the rest of the peninsula, and had comparatively little to fear from foreign invasion. Her attitude was one of proud and almost scornful isolation. In the Lombard Wars of Independence she remained neutral, and her name does not appear among the Signatories to the Peace of Constance. Both the Papacy and the Empire recognised her independence. Her true policy consisted in consolidating her maritime

<sup>20</sup> See the instructions furnished to Averardo dei Medici, quoted by Von Reumont in his *Life of Lorenzo*, vol. ii. p. 122, German edition.

empire and holding aloof from the affairs of Italy. As long as she adhered to this course, she remained the envy and the admiration of the rest of Europe.<sup>21</sup> It was only when she sought to extend her hold upon the mainland that she aroused the animosity of the Italian powers, and had to bear the brunt of the League of Cambray alone.<sup>22</sup> Her selfish prudence had been a source of dread long before this epoch: when she became aggressive, she was recognised as a common and intolerable enemy.

The external security of Venice was equalled by her internal repose. Owing to continued freedom from party quarrels, the Venetians were able to pursue a consistent course of constitutional development. They in fact alone of the Italian cities established and preserved the character of their state. Having originally founded a republic under the presidency of a Doge, who combined the offices of general and judge, and ruled in concert with a representative council of the chief citizens (697-1172), the Venetians by degrees caused this form of government to assume a strictly oligarchical character. They began by limiting the authority of the Doge, who, though elected for life, was in 1032 forbidden to associate his son in the supreme office of the state. In 1172 the election of the Doge was transferred from the people to the Grand Council, who, as a co-opting body, tended to become a close aristocracy. In 1179 the Ducal power was still further restricted by the creation of a senate called the Quarantia for the administration of justice; while in 1229 the Senate of the Pregadi, interposed between the Doge and the Grand Council, became an integral part of the constitution. To this latter Senate were assigned all deliberations upon peace and war, the voting of supplies, the confirmation of laws. Both the Quarantia and the Pregadi were elected by the Consiglio Grande, which by this time had become the virtual sovereign of the State of Venice. It is not necessary here to mention the further checks imposed upon the power of the Doges by the institution of officials named Correttori and Inquisitori, whose special business it was to see that the coronation oaths were duly observed, or by the regulations which prevented the supreme mag-

<sup>21</sup> De Comines, in his *Memoirs of the Reign of Charles VIII.* (tom. ii. p. 69), draws a striking picture of the impression made upon his mind by the good government of the state of Venice. This may be compared with what he says of the folly of Siena.

<sup>22</sup> See Mach. *Ist Fior.* lib. i.: 'Avendo loro con il tempo occupata Padova, Vicenza, Trevigi, e dipoi Verona, Bergamo e Brescia, e nel Reame e in Romagna molte città, cacciati dalla cupidità del dominare vennero in tanta opinione di potenza, che non solamente ai principi Italiani ma ai Rè oltramontani erano in terrore. Onde congiurati quelli contra di loro, in un giorno fu tolto loro quello stato che si avevano in molti anni con infiniti spendii guadagnato. E benchè ne abbino in questi ultimi tempi racquistato parte, non avendo racquistata nè la riputazione nè le forze, a discrezione d' altri, come tutti gli altri principi Italiani vivono.' It was Francesco Foscari who first to any important extent led the republic astray from its old policy. He meddled in Italian affairs, and sought to encroach upon the mainland. For this, and for the undue popularity he acquired thereby, the Council of Ten subjected him and his son Jacopo to the most frightfully protracted martyrdom that a relentless oligarchy has ever inflicted [1445-57].

istrate from taking any important action except in concert with carefully selected colleagues. Enough has been said to show that the constitution of Venice was a pyramid resting upon the basis of the Grand Council and rising to an ornamental apex, through the Senate, and the College, in the Doge. But in adopting this old simile—originally the happy thought of Donato Giannotti, it is said<sup>23</sup>—we must not forget that the vital force of the Grand Council was felt throughout the whole of this elaborate system, and that the same individuals were constantly appearing in different capacities. It is this which makes the great event of the years 1297–1319 so all-important for the future destinies of Venice. At this period the Grand Council was restricted to a certain number of noble families who had henceforth the hereditary right to belong to it. Every descendant of a member of the Grand Council could take his seat there at the age of twenty-five; and no new families, except upon the most extraordinary occasions, were admitted to this privilege.<sup>24</sup> By the Closing of the Grand Council, as the ordinances of this crisis were termed, the administration of Venice was vested for perpetuity in the hands of a few great houses. The final completion was given to the oligarchy in 1311 by the establishment of the celebrated Council of Ten,<sup>25</sup> who exercised a supervision over all the magistracies, constituted the Supreme Court of judicature, and ended by controlling the whole foreign and internal policy of Venice. The changes which I have thus briefly indicated are not to be regarded as violent alterations in the constitution, but rather as successive steps in its development. Even the Council of Ten, which seems at first sight the most tyrannous state-engine ever devised for the enslavement of a nation, was in reality a natural climax to the evolution which had been consistently advancing since the year 1172. Created originally during the troublous times which succeeded the closing of the Grand Council, for the express purpose of curbing unruly nobles and preventing the emergence of conspirators like Tiepolo, the Council of Ten were specially designed to act as a check upon the several orders in the state and to preserve its oligarch-

<sup>23</sup> Vol. ii. of his works, p. 37. On p. 29 he describes the population of Venice as divided into 'Popolari,' or plebians, exercising small industries, and so forth; 'Cittadini,' or the middle class, born in the state, and of more importance than the plebians; 'Gentiluomini,' or masters of Venice by sea and land, about 3,000 in number, corresponding to the burghers of Florence. What he says about the Constitution refers solely to this upper class. The elaborate work of M. Yriarte, *La Vie d'un Patricien de Venise au Seizième Siècle*, Paris, 1874, contains a complete analysis of the Venetian state-machine. See in particular what he says about the helplessness of the Doges, ch. xiii. 'Rex in foro, senator in curiâ, captivus in aulâ,' was a current phrase which expressed the contrast between their dignity of parade and real servitude. They had no personal freedom, and were always ruined by office. It was necessary to pass a law compelling the Doge elect to accept the onerous distinction thrust upon him. The Venetian oligarchs argued that it was good that one man should die for the people.

<sup>24</sup> See Giannotti, vol. ii. p. 55, for the mention of fifteen, admitted on the occasion of Balamonte Tiepolo's conspiracy, and of thirty ennobled during the Genoese war.

<sup>25</sup> The actual number of this Council was seventeen, for the Ten were associated with the Signoria, which consisted of the Doge and six Councillors.

ical character inviolate. They were elected by the Consiglio Grande, and at the expiration of their office were liable to render strict account of all that they had done. Nor was this magistracy coveted by the Venetian nobles. On the contrary, so burdensome were its duties, and so great was the odium which from time to time the Ten incurred in the discharge of their functions, that it was not always found easy to fill up their vacancies. A law had even to be passed that the Ten had not completed their magistracy before their successors were appointed.<sup>26</sup> They may therefore be regarded as a select committee of the citizens, who voluntarily delegated dictatorial powers to this small body in order to maintain their own ascendancy, to centralise the conduct of important affairs, to preserve secrecy in the administration of the republic, and to avoid the criticism to which the more public government of states like Florence was exposed.<sup>27</sup> The weakness of this portion of the state machinery was this: created with ill-defined and almost unlimited authority,<sup>28</sup> designed to supersede the other public functionaries on occasions of great moment, and composed of men whose ability placed them in the very first rank of citizens, the Ten could scarcely fail, as time advanced, to become a permanently oppressive power—a despotism within the bosom of an oligarchy. Thus in the whole mechanism of the state of Venice we trace the action of a permanent aristocracy tolerating, with a view to his own supremacy, an amount of magisterial control which in certain cases, like that of the two Foscari, amounted to the sternest tyranny. By submitting to the Council of Ten the nobility of Venice secured its hold upon the people and preserved unity in its policy.

No State has ever exercised a greater spell of fascination over its citizens than Venice. Of treason against the Republic there was little. Against the decrees of the Council, arbitrary though they might be, no one sought to rebel. The Venetian bowed in silence and obeyed, knowing that all his actions were watched, that his government had long arms in foreign lands, and that to arouse revolt in a body of burghers so thoroughly controlled by common interests would be impossible. Further security the Venetians gained by their mild and beneficent administration of subject cities, and by the prosperity in which their population flourished. When, during the war of the League of Cambray, Venice gave liberty to her towns upon the mainland, they voluntarily returned to her allegiance. At home, the inhabitants of the lagoons, who had never seen a hostile army at their gates, and whose taxes were light in comparison with those of the rest of Italy, regarded the nobles as the authors of their unexampled happiness. Meanwhile, these nobles were merchants. Idleness was unknown in Venice. Instead of excogi-

<sup>26</sup> Giannotti, vol. ii. p. 123.

<sup>27</sup> The diplomatic difficulties of a popular government, a 'governo largo,' as opposed to a 'governo stretto,' are set forth with great acumen by Guicciardini, *Op. Ined.* vol. ii. p. 84. Cf. vol. iii. p. 272.

<sup>28</sup> 'è la sua autorità pari a quella del Consiglio de' Pregati e di tutta la città,' says Giannotti, vol. ii. p. 120.

tating new constitutions or planning vengeance against hereditary foes, the Venetian attended to his commerce on the sea, swayed distant provinces, watched the interests of the state in foreign cities, and fought the naval battles of the republic. It was the custom of Venice to employ her patricians only on the sea as admirals, and never to entrust her armies to the generalship of burghers. This policy had undoubtedly its wisdom; for by these means the nobles had no opportunity of intriguing on a large scale in Italian affairs, and never found the chance of growing dangerously powerful abroad. But it pledged the State to that system of paid condottieri and mercenary troops, jealously watched and scarcely ever trustworthy, which proved nearly as ruinous to Venice as it did to Florence.

It is difficult to imagine a greater contrast than that which is presented by Florence to Venice. While Venice pursued one consistent course of gradual growth, and seemed immovable, Florence remained in perpetual flux, and altered as the strength of factions or of party leaders varied.<sup>29</sup> When the strife of Guelfs and Ghibellines, Neri and Bianchi, had exhausted her in the fourteenth century, she submitted for a while to the indirect ascendancy of the kings of Naples, who were recognised as Chiefs of the Gueff Party. Thence she passed for a few months into the hands of a Despot in the person of the Duke of Athens (1342-43). After the confirmation of her republican liberty followed a contest between the proletariat and the middle classes (Ciompi, 1378). During the fifteenth century she was kept continually disturbed by the rivalry of her great merchant families. The rule of the Albizzi, who fought the Visconti and extended the Florentine territory by numerous conquests, was virtually the despotism of a close oligarchy. This phase of her career was terminated by the rise of the Medici, who guided her affairs with a show of constitutional equity for four generations. In 1494 this state of things was violently shaken. The Florentines expelled the Medici, who had begun to throw off their mask and to assume the airs of sovereignty. Then they reconstituted their Commonwealth as nearly as they could upon the model of Venice, and to this new form of government Savonarola gave a quasi-theocratic complexion by naming Christ the king of Florence.<sup>30</sup> But the internal elements of discord were too potent for the maintenance of this régime. The Medici were recalled; and this time Florence fell under the shadow of Church rule, being controlled by Leo X. and Clement VII., through the hands of prelates whom they made the guardians and advisers of their nephews.

<sup>29</sup> 'Nunquam in eodem statu permanserunt,' says Marco Foscari (as quoted above, p. 42 of his report). The flux of Florence struck a Venetian profoundly.

<sup>30</sup> The Gonfalonier Capponi put up a tablet on the Public Palace, in 1528, to this effect: 'Jesus Christus Rex Florentini Populi S. F. decreto electus.' This inscription is differently given. See Varchi, vol. i. p. 266; Segni, p. 46. Nothing is more significant of the difference between Venice and Florence than the political idealism implied in this religious consecration of the republic by statute. In my essay on 'Florence and the Medici' (*Sketches and Studies in Italy*) I have attempted to condense the internal history of the Republic and to analyse the statecraft of the Medici.



In 1527 a final effort for liberty shed undying lustre on the noblest of Italian cities. The sack of Rome had paralysed the Pope. His family were compelled to quit the Medicean palace. The Grand Council was restored; a Gonfalonier was elected; Florence suffered the hardships of her memorable siege. At the end of her trials, menaced alike by Pope and Emperor, who shook hands over her prostrate corpse, betrayed by her general, the infamous Malatesta Baglioni, and sold by her own selfish citizens, she had to submit to the hereditary sovereignty of the Medici. It was in vain that Lorenzino of that House pretended to play Brutus, and murdered his cousin the Duke Alessandro in 1536. Cosimo succeeded in the same year, and won the title of Grand Duke, which he transmitted to a line of semi-Austrian princes.

Throughout all these vicissitudes every form and phase of republican government was advocated, discussed, and put in practice by the Florentines. All the arts of factions, all the machinations of exiles, all the skill of demagogues, all the selfishness of party-leaders, all the learning of scholars, all the cupidity of subordinate officials, all the daring of conspirators, all the ingenuity of theorists, and all the malice of traitors, were brought successively or simultaneously into play by the burghers, who looked upon their State as something they might mould at will. One thing at least is clear amid so much apparent confusion, that Florence was living a vehemently active and self-conscious life, acknowledging no principle of stability in her constitution, but always stretching forward after that ideal *Reggimento* which was never realised.<sup>31</sup>

It is worth while to consider more in detail the different magistracies by which the government of Florence was conducted between the years 1250 and 1531, and the gradual changes in the constitution which prepared the way for the Medicean tyranny.<sup>32</sup> It is only thus that an accurate conception of the difference between the republican system of Venice and of Florence can be gained. Before the date 1282, which may be fixed as the turning point in Florentine history, we hear of twelve Anziani, two chosen for each Sestiere of the city, acting in concert with a foreign Podestà, and a Captain of the People charged with military authority. At this time no distinction was made between nobles and plebeians; and the town, though Guelf, had not enacted rigorous laws against the Ghibelline families. Towards the end of the thirteenth century, however, important changes were effected in the every elements of the commonwealth. The Anziani were superseded by the Priors of the Arts. Eight Priors, together with a new officer called the Gonfalonier

<sup>31</sup> In his 'Proemio' to the *Trattato del Reggimento di Firenze* Guicciardini thus describes the desideratum: 'introdurre in Firenze un governo onesto, bene ordinato, e che veramente si potesse chiamare libero, il che dalla sua prima origine insino a oggi non è mai stato cittadino alcuno che abbia saputo o potuto fare.'

<sup>32</sup> I will place in an appendix (No. ii.) translations of Varchi, book iii. sections 20-22, and Nardi, book i. cap. 4, which give complete and clear accounts of the Florentine Constitution after 1292.



of Justice, formed the Signoria, dwelling at public charge in the Palazzo and holding office only for two months.<sup>33</sup> No one who had not been matriculated into one of the Arti or commercial guilds could henceforth bear office in the State. At the same time severe measures, called *Ordinanze della Giustizia*, were passed, by which the nobles were for ever excluded from the government, and the Gonfalonier of Justice was appointed to maintain civil order by checking their pride and turbulence.<sup>34</sup> These modifications of the constitution, effected between 1282 and 1292, gave its peculiar character to the Florentine republic. Henceforward Florence was governed solely by merchants. Both Varchi and Machiavelli have recorded unfavourable opinions of the statute which reduced the republic of Florence to a commonwealth of shop-keepers.<sup>35</sup> But when we read these criticisms, we must bear in mind the internecine ferocity of party-strife at this period, and the disorders to which a city divided between a territorial aristocracy and a commercial bourgeoisie was perpetually exposed. If anything could make the *Ordinanze della Giustizia* appear rational, it would be a cool perusal of the 'Chronicle' of Matarazzo, which sets forth the wretched state of Perugia owing to the feuds of its patrician houses, the Oddi and the Baglioni.<sup>36</sup> Peace for the republic was not, however, secured by these strong measures. The factions of the Neri and Bianchi opened the fourteenth century with battles and proscriptions; and in 1323 the constitution had again to be modified. At this date the Signoria of eight Priors with the Gonfalonier of Justice, the College of the twelve Buonuomini, and the sixteen Gonfaloniers of the companies—called collectively *i tre maggiori*, or the three superior magistracies—were rendered eligible only to Guelph citizens of the age of thirty, who had qualified in one of the seven Arti Maggiori, and whose names were drawn by lot. This mode of election, the most democratic which it is possible to adopt, held good through all subsequent changes in the state. Its immediate object was to quiet discontent and to remove intrigue by opening the magistracies to all citizens alike. But, as Nardi has pointed out, it weakened the sense of responsibility in the burghers, who, when their names were once included in the bags kept for the purpose, felt sure of their election, and had no inducement to maintain a high standard of integrity. Sismondi also dates from this epoch the withdrawal of the Florentines from military service.<sup>37</sup> Nor, as the sequel shows, was the

<sup>33</sup> See Machiavelli, *Ist. Fior.* lib. ii. sect. 11. The number of the Priors was first three, then six, and finally eight. Up to 1282 the city had been divided into Sestieri. It was then found convenient to divide it into quarters, and the numbers followed this alteration.

<sup>34</sup> Machiavelli, *Ist. Fior.* lib. ii. sect. 13, may be consulted for the history of Giano della Bella and his memorable ordinance. Dino Compagni's *Chronicle* contains the account of a contemporary.

<sup>35</sup> See Varchi, vol. i. p. 169; Mach. *Ist. Fior.* end of book ii.

<sup>36</sup> *Archivio Storico*, vol. xvi. See also the article 'Perugia,' in my *Sketches in Italy and Greece*.

<sup>37</sup> Vol. iii. p. 347.

measure efficient as a check upon the personal ambition of encroaching party leaders. The *Squittino* and the *Borse* became instruments in the hands of the Medici for the consolidation of their tyranny.<sup>38</sup> By the end of the fourteenth century (about 1378) the Florentines had to meet a new difficulty. The Guelf citizens began to abuse the so-called Law of Admonition, by means of which the Ghibellines were excluded from the government. This law had formed an essential part of the measures of 1323. In the intervening half century a new aristocracy, distinguished by the name of *nobili popolani*, had grown up and were now threatening the republic with a close oligarchy.<sup>39</sup> The discords which had previously raged between the people and the patricians were now transferred to this new aristocracy and the plebeians. It was found necessary to abolish the Admonition, which had been made a pretext of excluding all *novi homines* from the government, and to place the members of the inferior Arti on the same footing as those of the superior.<sup>40</sup> At this epoch the Medici, who neither belonged to the ancient aristocracy nor yet to the more distinguished houses of the *nobili popolani*, but rather to the so-called *gente grassa* or substantial tradesmen, first acquired importance. It was by a law of Salvestro de' Medici's in 1378 that the constitution received its final development in the direction of equality. Yet after all this levelling, and in spite of the vehement efforts made by the proletariat on the occasion of the Ciompi outbreak, the exclusive nature of the Florentine republic was maintained. The franchise was never extended to more than the burghers, and the matter in debate was always virtually, who shall be allowed to rank as citizen upon the register? In fact, by using the pregnant words of Machiavelli, we may sum up the history of Florence to this point in one sentence: 'Di Firenze in prima si dividono intra loro i nobili, dipoi i nobili e il popolo, e in ultimo il popolo e la plebe; e molte volte occorse che una di queste parti rimasa superiore, si divide in due.'<sup>41</sup>

In the next generation the constitutional history of Florence exhibits a new phase. The equality which has been introduced into all classes of the commonwealth, combined with an absence of any state machinery like that of Venice, exposed Florence at this period to the encroachments of astute and selfish parvenus. The Medici, who had hitherto been nobodies, begin now to aspire to despotism. Partly by his remarkable talent for intrigue, partly by the clever use which he made of his vast wealth, and partly by espousing the plebeian cause, Cosimo de'

<sup>38</sup> See App. ii. for the phrases 'Squittino' and 'Borse.'

<sup>39</sup> Of these new nobles the Albizzi and Ricci, deadly foes, were the most eminent. The former strove to exclude the Medici from the government.

<sup>40</sup> The number of the Arti varied at different times. Varchi treats of them as finally consisting of seven maggiori and fourteen minori.

<sup>41</sup> Proemio to *Storia Fiorentina*. 'In Florence the nobles first split up, then the nobles and the people, lastly the people and the multitude; and it often happened that when one of these parties got the upper hand, it divided into two camps.' For the meaning of *Popolo* see above. p. 29.

Medici succeeded in monopolising the government. It was the policy of the Medici to create a party dependent for pecuniary aid upon their riches, and attached to their interests by the closest ties of personal necessity. At the same time they showed consummate caution in the conduct of the state, and expended large sums on works of public utility. There was nothing mean in their ambition; and though posterity must condemn the arts by which they sought to sap the foundations of freedom in their native city, we are forced to acknowledge that they shared the noblest enthusiasms of their brilliant era. Little by little they advanced so far in the enslavement of Florence that the elections of all the magistrates, thought still conducted by lot, were determined at their choice; the names of none but men devoted to their interests were admitted to the bags from which the candidates for office were selected, while proscriptive measures of various degrees of rigour excluded their enemies from participation in the government.<sup>42</sup> At length in 1480 the whole machinery of the republic was suspended by Lorenzo de' Medici in favour of the board of Seventy, whom he nominated, and with whom, acting like a Privy Council, he administered the state.<sup>43</sup> It is clear that this revolution could never have been effected without a succession of coups d'état. The instrument for their accomplishment lay ready to the hands of the Medicean party in the pernicious system of the Parlamento and Balìa, by means of which the people, assembled from time to time in the public square, and intimidated by the reigning faction, entrusted full powers to a select committee nominated in private by chiefs of the great house.<sup>44</sup> It is also clear that so much political roguery

<sup>42</sup> What Machiavelli says (*Ist. Fior.* vii. 1) about the arts of Cosimo contains the essence of the policy by which the Medici rose. Compare v. 4 and vii. 4-6 for his character of Cosimo. Guicciardini (*Op. Ined.* vol. ii. p. 68) describes the use made of extraordinary taxation as a weapon of offence against his enemies, by Cosimo: 'usò le gravezze in luogo de' pugnali che comunemente suole usare chi ha simili reggimenti nelle mani.' The Marchese Gino Capponi (*Arch. Stor.* vol. i. pp. 315-20) analyses the whole Medicean policy in a critique of great ability.

<sup>43</sup> Guicciardini (*Op. Ined.* vol. ii. pp. 35-49) exposes the principle and the *modus operandi* of this Council of Seventy, by means of which Lorenzo controlled the election of the magistracies, diverted the public moneys to his own use, and made his will law in Florence. The councils which he superseded at this date were the Consiglio del Popolo and the Consiglio del Comune, about which see Nardi, lib. i. cap. 4.

<sup>44</sup> For the operation of the Parlamento and Balìa, see Varchi, vol. ii. p. 372; Segni, p. 199; Nardi, lib. vi. cap. 4. Segni says: 'The Parlamento is a meeting of the Florentine people on the Piazza of the Signory. When the Signory has taken its place to address the meeting, the piazza is guarded by armed men, and then the people are asked whether they wish to give absolute power (Balìa) and authority to the citizens named, for their good. When the answer, yes, prompted partly by inclination and partly by compulsion, is returned, the Signory immediately retires into the palace. This is all that is meant by this Parlamento, which thus gives away the full power of effecting a change in the state.' The description given by Marco Foscarini, p. 44 (*loc. cit. supr.*) is to the same effect, but the Venetian exposes more clearly the despotic nature of the institution in the hands of the Medici. It is well known how hostile Savonarola was to an institution which had lent itself so easily to despotism. This couplet he inscribed on the walls of the Council Chamber, in 1495:—

'E sappi che chi vuol parlamento  
Vuol torti dalle mani il reggimento.'

Compare the proverb, 'Chi disse parlamento disse guastamento.'

could not have been successful without an extensive demoralisation of the upper rank of citizens. The Medici in effect bought and sold the honour of the public officials, lent money, jobbed posts of profit, and winked at speculation, until they had created a sufficient body of *âmes damnées*, men who had everything to gain by a continuance of their corrupt authority. The party so formed, including even such distinguished citizens as the Guicciardini, Baccio Valori, and Francesco Vettori, proved the chief obstacle to the restoration of Florentine liberty in the sixteenth century.

This tyranny of a commercial family, swaying the republic without the title and with but little of the pomp of princes, subsisted until the hereditary presidency of the state was conferred upon Alessandro de' Medici, Duke of Cività di Penna, in 1531. Cosimo, his successor, obtained the rank of Grand Duke from Pius V. in 1569, and his son received the imperial sanction to the title in 1575. The re-establishment at two different periods of a free commonwealth upon the sounder basis of the Consiglio Grande (1494-1512 and 1527-30) formed but two episodes in the history of this masked but tenacious despotism. Had Savonarola's constitution been adopted in the thirteenth instead of at the end of the fifteenth century, the stability of Florence might have been secured. But at the latter date the roots of the Medicean influence were too widely intertwined with private interests, the jealousies of classes and of factions were too inveterate, for any large and wholesome form of popular government to be universally acceptable. Besides, the burghers had been reduced to a nerveless equality of servitude, in which ambition and avarice took the place of patriotism; while the corruption of morals, fostered by the Medici for the confirmation of their own authority, was so widely spread as to justify Segni, Varchi, Giannotti, Guicciardini, and Machiavelli in representing the Florentines as equally unable to maintain their liberty and to submit to control.

The historical vicissitudes of Florence were no less remarkable than the unity of Venice. If in Venice we can trace the permanent and corporate existence of a state superior to the individuals who composed it, Florence exhibits the personal activity and conscious effort of her citizens. Nowhere can the intricate relations of classes to the commonwealth be studied more minutely than in the annals of Florence. In no other city have opinions had greater value in determining historical events; and nowhere was the influence of character in men of mark more notable. In this agitated political atmosphere the wonderful Florentine intelligence, which Varchi celebrated as the special glory of the Tuscan soil, and which Vasari referred to something felicitous in Tuscan air, was sharpened to the finest edge.<sup>45</sup> Successive generations of practical and theoretical statesmen trained the race to reason upon government, and to regard politics as a science. Men of letters were at the same time also prominent in public affairs. When, for instance, the

<sup>45</sup> Varchi, ix. 49; Vasari, xii. p. 158; Burckhardt, p. 270.

exiles of 1529 sued Duke Alessandro before Charles V. at Naples, Jacopo Nardi drew up their pleas, and Francesco Guicciardini rebutted them in the interest of his master. Machiavelli learned his philosophy at the Courts of France and Germany and in the camp of Cesare Borgia. Segni shared the anxieties of Nicolo Capponi, when the Gonfalonier was impeached for high treason to the state of Florence. This list might be extended almost indefinitely, with the object of proving the intimate connection which subsisted at Florence between the thinkers and the actors. No other European community of modern times has ever acquired so subtle a sense of its own political existence, has ever reasoned upon its past history so acutely, or has ever displayed so much ingenuity in attempting to control the future. Venice on the contrary owed but little to the creative genius of her citizens. In Venice the state was everything: the individual was almost nothing. We find little reflection upon politics, and no speculative philosophy of history among the Venetians until the date of Trifone Gabrielli and Paruta. Their records are all positive and detailed. The generalisations and comparisons of the Florentines are absent; nor was it till a late date of the Renaissance that the Venetian history came to be written as a whole. It would seem as though the constitutional stability which formed the secret of the strength of Venice was also the source of comparative intellectual inertness. This contrast between the two republics displayed itself even in their art. Statues of Judith the tyrannicide, and of David the liberator of his country, adorned the squares and loggie of Florence. The painters of Venice represented their commonwealth as a beautiful queen receiving the homage of her subjects and the world. Florence had no mythus similar to that which made Venice the Bride of the Sea, and which justified the Doge in hailing Caterina Cornaro as daughter of S. Mark's (1471). It was in the personal courage and intelligence of individual heroes that the Florentines discovered the counterpart of their own spirit; whereas the Venetians personified their city as a whole, and paid their homage to the Genius of the State.

It is not merely fanciful to compare Athens, the city of self-conscious political activity, variable, cultivated, and ill-adapted by its very freedom for prolonged stability, with Florence; Sparta, firmly based upon an ancient constitution, indifferent to culture, and solid at the cost of some rigidity, with Venice. As in Greece the philosophers of Athens, especially Plato and Aristotle, wondered at the immobility of Sparta and idealised her institutions; so did the theorists of Florence, Savonarola, Giannotti, Guicciardini, look with envy at the state machinery which secured repose and liberty for Venice. The parallel between Venice and Sparta becomes still more remarkable when we inquire into the causes of their decay. Just as the Ephors, introduced at first as a safeguard to the constitution, by degrees extinguished the influence of the royal families, superseded the Senate, and exercised a tyrannous control over every department of the state; so the Council of Ten, dangerous because of its vaguely defined dictatorial functions, reduced Venice to a despot-

ism.<sup>46</sup> The gradual dwindling of the Venetian aristocracy, and the impoverishment of many noble families, which rendered votes in the Grand Council venal, and threw the power into the hands of a very limited oligarchy, complete the parallel.<sup>47</sup> One of the chief sources of decay both to Venice and to Sparta was that shortsighted policy which prevented the nobles from recruiting their ranks by the admission of new families. The system again of secret justice, the espionage, and the calculated terrorism, by means of which both the Spartan Ephoralty and the Venetian Council imposed their will upon the citizens, were stifling to the free life of a republic.<sup>48</sup> Venice in the end became demoralised in politics and profligate in private life. Her narrowing oligarchy watched the national degeneration with approval, knowing that it is easier to control a vitiated populace than to curb a nation habituated to the manly virtues.

Between Athens and Florence the parallel is not so close. These two republics, however, resemble one another in the freedom and variety of their institutions. In Athens, as in Florence, there was constant change and a highly developed political consciousness. Eminent men played the same important part in both. In both the genius of individuals was even stronger than the character of the state. Again, as Athens displayed more of a Panhellenic feeling than any other Greek city, so Florence was invariably more alive to the interests of Italy at large than any other state of the peninsula. Florence, like Athens, was the centre of culture for the nation. Like Athens, she gave laws to her sister towns in language, in literature, in fine arts, poetry, philosophy, and history. Without Florence it is not probable that Italy would have taken the place of proud pre-eminence she held so long in Europe. Florence never attained to the material greatness of Athens, because her power, relatively to the rest of Italy, was slight, her factions were incessant, and her connection with the Papacy was a perpetual source of weakness. But many of the causes which ruined Athens were in full operation at Florence. First and foremost was the petulant and vari-

<sup>46</sup> Aristotle terms the Spartan Ephoralty *ισοτέρανος*. Giannotti (vol. ii. p. 120) compares the Ten to dictators. We might bring the struggles of the Spartan kings with the Ephoralty into comparison with the attempts of the Doges Falieri and Foscarini to make themselves the chiefs of the republic in more than name. Müller, in his *Dorians*, observes that 'the Ephoralty was the moving element, the principle of change in the Spartan constitution, and, in the end, the cause of its dissolution.' Sismondi remarks that the precautions which led to the creation of the Council of Ten 'dénaturèrent entièrement la constitution de l'état.'

<sup>47</sup> See what Aristotle in the *Politics* says about *δολιγανθρωπία*, and the unequal distribution of property. As to the property of the Venetian nobles, see Sanudo, *Vite dei Duchi*, Murat. xxii. p. 1194, who mentions the benevolences of the richer families to the poor. They built houses for aristocratic paupers to live in free of rent.

<sup>48</sup> A curious passage in Plutarch's *Life of Cleomenes* (Clough's Translation, vol. iv. p. 474) exactly applies to the Venetian state-craft:—'They, the Spartans, worship Fear, not as they do supernatural powers which they dread, esteeming it hurtful, but thinking their polity is chiefly kept up by fear . . . and therefore the Lacedæmonians placed the temple of Fear by the Syssitium of the Ephors, having raised that magistracy to almost regal authority.'



able temper of a democracy, so well described by Plato, and so ably analysed by Machiavelli. The want of agreement among the versatile Florentines, fertile in plans but incapable of concerted action, was a chief source of political debility. Varchi and Segni both relate how, in spite of wealth, ability, and formidable forces, the Florentine exiles under the guidance of Filoppo Strozzi (1533-37) became the laughing-stock of Italy through their irresolution. The Venetian ambassadors agree in representing the burghers of Florence as timid from excess of intellectual mobility. And Dante, whose insight into national characteristics was of the keenest, has described in ever-memorable lines the temperament of his fickle city (*Purg.* vi. 135-51).

Much of this instability was due to the fact that Florentine, like Athenian, intelligence was over-developed. It passed into mere cleverness, and over-reached itself. Next we may note the tyranny which both republics exercised over cities that had once been free. Athens created a despotic empire instead of forming an Ionian Confederation. Florence reduced Pisa to the most miserable servitude, rendered herself odious to Arezzo and Volterra, and never rested from attempts upon the liberties of Lucca and Siena. All these states, which as a Tuscan federation should have been her strength in the hour of need, took the first opportunity of throwing off her yoke and helping her enemies. What Florence spent in recapturing Pisa, after the passage of Charles VIII. in 1494, is incalculable. And no sooner was she in difficulties during the siege of 1529, than both Arezzo and Pisa declared for her foes.

It will not do to push historical parallels too far, interesting as it may be to note a repetition of the same phenomena at distant periods and under varying conditions of society. At the same time, to observe fundamental points of divergence is no less profitable. Many of the peculiarities of Greek history are attributable to the fact that a Greek commonwealth consisted of citizens living in idleness, supported by their slaves, and bound to the state by military service and by the performance of civic duties. The distinctive mark of both Venice and Florence, on the other hand, was that their citizens were traders. The Venetians carried on the commerce of the Levant; the Florentines were manufacturers and bankers: the one town sent her sons forth on the seas to barter and exchange; the other was full of speculators, calculating rates of interest and discount, and contracting with princes for the conduct of expensive wars. The mercantile character of these Italian republics is so essential to their history that it will not be out of place to enlarge a little on the topic. We have seen that the Florentines rendered commerce a condition of burghership. Giannotti, writing the life of one of the chief patriots of the republic.<sup>49</sup> says: 'Egli stette a bottega, come fanno la maggior parte de' nostri, così nobili come

<sup>49</sup> *Sulle azioni del Ferruccio*, vol. i. p. 44. The report of Marco Foscari on the state of Florence, already quoted more than once, contains a curious aristocratic comment upon the shop-life of illustrious Florentine citizens. See Appendix ii. Even Piero de' Medici refused a Neapolitan fief on the ground that he was a tradesman.



ignobili.' To quote instances in a matter so clear and obvious would be superfluous: else I might show how Bardi and Peruzzi, Strozzi, Medici, Pitti, and Pazzi, while they ranked with princes at the Courts of France, or Rome, or Naples, were moneylenders, mortgagees, and bill-discounters in every great city of Europe. The Palle of the Medici, which emboss the gorgeous ceilings of the Cathedral of Pisa, still swing above the pawnbroker's shop in London. And though great families like the Rothschilds in the most recent days have successfully asserted the aristocracy of wealth acquired by usury, it still remains a surprising fact that the daughter of the mediæval bankers should have given a monarch to the French in the sixteenth century.

A very lively picture of the modes of life and the habits of mind peculiar to the Italian burgher may be gained by the perusal of Agnolo Pandolfini's treatise, '*Del Governo della Famiglia*.' This essay should be read side by side with Castiglione's '*Cortegiano*,' by all who wish to understand the private life of the Italians in the age of the Renaissance.<sup>50</sup> Pandolfini lived at the time of the war of Florence with Filippo Visconti the exile, and the return of Cosimo de' Medici. He was employed by the republic on important missions, and his substance was so great that, on occasion of extraordinary aids, his contributions stood third or fourth upon the list. In the Councils of the Republic he always advocated peace, and in particular he spoke against the *Impresa di Lucca*. As age advanced, he retired from public affairs and devoted himself to study, religious exercises, and country excursions. He possessed a beautiful villa at Signa, notable for the splendour of its maintenance in all points which befit a gentleman. There he had the honour on various occasions of entertaining Pope Eugenius, King René, Francesco Sforza, and the Marchese Piccinino. His sons lived with him, and spent much of their spare time in hawking and the chase. They were three—Carlo, who rose to great dignity in the republic, Giannozzo, still more eminent as a public man, and Pandolfo, who died young. His wife, one of the Strozzi, died while Agnolo was between thirty and forty; but he never married again. He was a great friend of Lionardo Aretino, who published nothing without his approval. He lived to be upwards of eighty-five, and died in 1446. These facts sufficiently indicate what sort of man was the supposed author of the '*Essay on the Family*,' proving as they do, that he passed his leisure among princes and scholars, and that he played some part in the public affairs of the State of Florence. Yet his view of human life is wholly bourgeois, though by no means ignoble.

<sup>50</sup> I ought to state that Pandolfini is at least a century earlier in date than Castiglione, and that he represents a more primitive condition of society. The facts I have mentioned about his life are given on the authority of Vespasiano da Bisticci. The references are made to the Milanese edition of 1802. It must also be added that there are strong reasons for assigning the treatise in question to Leo Battista Alberti. As it professes, however, to give a picture of Pandolfini's family, I have adhered to the old title. But the whole question of the authorship of the *Famiglia* is fully discussed in the last section of my book, which deals with Italian literature. Personally, I accept the theory of Alberti's authorship.

In his conception, the first of all virtues is thrift, which should regulate the use not only of money but of all the gifts of nature and of fortune. The proper economy of the mind involves liberal studies, courteous manners, honest conduct and religion.<sup>51</sup> The right use of the body implies keeping it in good health by continence, exercise and diet.<sup>52</sup> The thrift of time consists in being never idle. Agnolo's sons, who are represented as talking with their father in this dialogue, ask him, in relation to the gifts of fortune whether he thinks the honours of the state desirable. This question introduces a long and vehement invective against the life of a professional statesman, as of necessity fraudulent, mendacious, egotistic, cruel.<sup>53</sup> The private man of middle station is really happiest: and only a sense of patriotism should induce him, not seeking but when sought, to serve the state in public office. The really dear possessions of a man are his family, his wealth, his good repute, and his friendships. In order to be successful in the conduct of the family, a man must choose a large and healthy house, where the whole of his offspring, children and grandchildren, may live together. He must own an estate which will supply him with corn, wine, oil, wood, fowls, in fact with all the necessities of life, so that he may not need to buy much. The main food of the family will be bread and wine. The discussion of the utility of the farm leads Agnolo to praise the pleasure and profit to be derived from life in the Villa. But at the same time a townhouse has to be maintained; and it is here that the sons of the family should be educated, so that they may learn caution, and avoid vice by knowing its ugliness. In order to meet expenses, some trade must be followed, silk or wool manufacture being preferred; and in this the whole family should join, the head distributing work of various kinds to his children, as he deems most fitting, and always employing them rather than strangers. Thus we get the three great elements of the Florentine citizen's life: the *casa*, or town-house, the *villa*, or country-farm, and the *bottega*, or place of business. What follows is principally concerned with the details of economy. Expenses are of two sorts: necessary, for the repair of the house, the maintenance of the farm, the stocking of the shop; and unnecessary, for plate, house decoration, horses, grand clothes, entertainments. On this topic Agnolo inveighs with severity against household parasites, bravi, and dissolute dependents.<sup>54</sup> A little further on he indulges in another diatribe against great nobles, *i signori*, from whom he would have his sons keep clear at any cost.<sup>55</sup> It is the animosity of the industrious burghers for the haughty, pleasure-loving, idle, careless man of blood and high estate. In the bourgeois household described by Pandolfino no one can be indolent. The men have to work outside and

<sup>51</sup> A beautiful description of the religious temper, p. 74.

<sup>52</sup> What Pandolfino says about the beauty of the body is worthy of a Greek: what he says about exercise might have been written by an Englishman, p. 77.

<sup>53</sup> Pp. 82-89 are very important as showing how low the art of politics had sunk in Italy.

<sup>54</sup> P. 125.

<sup>55</sup> P. 175.

collect wealth, the women to stay at home and preserve it. The character of a good housewife is sketched very minutely. Pandolfini describes how, when he was first married, he took his wife over the house, and gave up to her care all its contents. Then he went into their bedroom, and made her kneel with him before Madonna, and prayed God to give them wealth, friends, and male children. After that he told her that honesty would be her great charm in his eyes, as well as her chief virtue, and advised her to forego the use of paints and cosmetics. Much sound advice follows as to the respective positions of the master and the mistress in the household, the superintendence of domestics, and the right ordering of the most insignificant matters. The quality of the dress which will beseem the children of an honoured citizen on various occasions, the pocket money of the boys, the food of the common table, are all discussed with some minuteness; and the wife is made to feel that she must learn to be neither jealous nor curious about concerns which her husband finds it expedient to keep private.

The charm of a treatise like that of Pandolfini on the family evaporates as soon as we try to make a summary of its contents. Enough, however, has been quoted to show the thoroughly bourgeois tone which prevailed among the citizens of Florence in the fifteenth century.<sup>56</sup> Very important results were the natural issue of this commercial spirit in the State. Talking of the Ordinance di Giustizia, Varchi observes: 'While they removed in part the civil discords of Florence, they almost entirely extinguished all nobility of feeling in the Florentines, and tended as much to diminish the power and haughtiness of the city as to abate the insolence of the patriciate.'<sup>57</sup> A little further on he says: 'Hence may all prudent men see how ill-ordered in all things, save only in the Grand Council, has been the commonwealth of Florence; seeing that, to speak of nought else, that kind of men who in a wisely constituted republic ought not to fulfil any magistracy whatever, the merchants and artisans of all sorts, are in Florence alone capable of taking office, to the exclusion of all others. Machiavelli, less wordy but far more emphatic than Varchi, says of the same revolution: 'This caused the abandonment by Florence not only of arms, but of all nobility of soul.'<sup>58</sup> The most notable consequence of the mercantile temper of the republics was the ruinous system of mercenary warfare, with all its attendant evils of ambitious captains of adventure, irresponsible soldiery, and mock campaigns, adopted by the free Italian States. It is true that even if the Italians had maintained their national militias in full force, they might not have been able to resist the shock of France and Spain any better than the armies of Thebes, Sparta, and Athens averted the Macedonian hegemony. But they would at least have run a better chance,

<sup>56</sup> Varchi (book x. cap. 69) quotes a Florentine proverb: 'Chiunque non sta a bottega è ladro.' See above, p. 187.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 168; compare vol. ii. p. 87, however.

<sup>58</sup> *Ist. Fior.* lib. ii. end. Aristotle's contempt for the *τεχνίται* emerges in these comments of the doctrinaires.

and not perhaps have perished so ignobly through the treason of an Alfonso d' Este (1527), of a Marquis of Pescara (1525), of a Duke of Urbino (1527), and of a Malatesta Baglioni (1530).<sup>59</sup> Machiavelli, in a weighty passage at the end of the first book of his Florentine History, sums up the various causes which contributed to the disuse of national arms among the Italians of the Renaissance. The fear of the despot for his subjects, the priest-rule of the Church, the jealousy of Venice for her own nobles, and the commercial sluggishness of the Florentine burghers, caused each and all of these powers, otherwise so different, to entrust their armies to paid captains. 'Di questi adunque oziosi principi e di queste vilissime armi sarà piena la mia istoria,' is the contemptuous phrase with which he winds up his analysis.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>59</sup> To multiply the instances of fraud and treason on the part of Italian condottieri would be easy. I have only mentioned the notable examples which fall within a critical period of five years. The Marquis of Pescara betrayed to Charles V. the league for the liberation of Italy, which he had joined at Milan. The Duke of Ferrara received and victualled Bourbon's (then Frundsberg's) army on its way to sack Rome, because he spited the Pope, and wanted to seize Modena for himself. The Duke of Urbino, wishing to punish Clement VII. for personal injuries, omitted to relieve Rome when it was being plundered by the Lutherans, though he held the commission of the Italian League. Malatesta Baglioni sold Florence, which he had undertaken to defend, to the Imperial army under the Prince of Orange.

<sup>60</sup> 'With the records of these indolent princes and most abject armaments, my history will, therefore, be filled. Compare the following passage in a letter from Machiavelli to Francesco Guicciardini (*Op.* vol. x. p. 255); 'Comincio ora a scrivere di nuovo, e mi sfogo accusando i principi, the hanno fatto ogni cosa per condurci qui.'

## CHAPTER V

### THE FLORENTINE HISTORIANS

*Florence, the City of Intelligence—Cupidity, Curiosity, and the Love of Beauty—Florentine Historical Literature—Philosophical Study of History—Ricordano Malaspina—Florentine History compared with the Chronicles of other Italian Towns—The Villani—The Date 1300—Statistics—Dante's Political Essays and Pamphlets—Dino Compagni—Latin Histories of Florence in Fifteenth Century—Leonardo Bruni and Poggio Bracciolini—The Historians of the First Half of the Sixteenth Century—Men of Action and Men of Letters: the Doctrinaires—Florence between 1494 and 1537—Varchi, Segni, Nardi, Pitti, Nerli, Guicciardini—The Political Importance of these Writers—The Last Years of Florentine Independence, and the Siege of 1529—State of Parties—Filippo Strozzi—Different Views of Florentine Weakness taken by the Historians—Their Literary Qualities—Francesco Guicciardini and Niccolò Machiavelli—Scientific Statistics—Discord between Life and Literature—The Biography of Guicciardini—His 'Istoria d'Italia,' 'Dialogo del Reggimento di Firenze,' 'Storia Fiorentina.' 'Ricordi'—Biography of Machiavelli—His Scheme of a National Militia—Dedication of 'The Prince'—Political Ethics of the Italian Renaissance—The 'Discorsi'—The Seven Books on the Art of War and the 'History of Florence.'*

FLORENCE was essentially the city of intelligence in modern times. Other nations have surpassed the Italians in their genius—the quality which gave a superhuman power of insight to Shakspeare and an universal sympathy to Goethe. But nowhere else except at Athens has the whole population of a city been so permeated with ideas, so highly intellectual by nature, so keen in perception, so witty and so subtle, as at Florence. The fine and delicate spirit of the Italians existed in quintessence among the Florentines. And of this superiority not only they, but the inhabitants also of Rome and Lombardy and Naples, were conscious. Boniface VIII., when he received the ambassadors of the Christian powers in Rome on the occasion of the Jubilee in 1300, observed that all of them were citizens of Florence. The witticism which he is said to have uttered, *i Fiorentini essere il quinto elemento*, 'that the men of Florence form a fifth element,' passed into a proverb. The primacy of the Florentines in literature, the fine arts, law, scholarship, philosophy, and science was acknowledged throughout Italy.

When the struggle for existence has been successfully terminated, and the mere instinct of self-preservation no longer absorbs the activities of a people, then the three chief motive forces of civilisation begin to operate. These are cupidity, or the desire of wealth and all that it procures; curiosity, or the desire to discover new facts about the world and man; and the love of beauty, which is the parent of all art. Commerce,

philosophy, science, scholarship, sculpture, architecture, painting, music, poetry, are the products of these ruling impulses—everything in fact which gives a higher value to the life of man. Different nations have been swayed by these passions in different degrees. The artistic faculty, which owes its energy to the love of beauty, has been denied to some; the philosophic faculty, which starts with curiosity, to others; and some again have shown but little capacity for amassing wealth by industry or calculation. It is rare to find a whole nation possessed of all in an equal measure of perfection. Such, however, were the Florentines.<sup>1</sup> The mere sight of the city and her monuments would suffice to prove this. But we are not reduced to the necessity of divining what Florence was by the inspection of her churches, palaces, and pictures. That marvellous intelligence which was her pride burned brightly in a long series of historians and annalists, who have handed down to us the biography of the city in volumes as remarkable for penetrative acumen as for definite delineation and dramatic interest. We possess picture-galleries of pages in which the great men of Florence live again and seem to breathe and move, epics of the commonwealth's vicissitudes from her earliest commencement, detailed tragedies and highly finished episodes, studies of separate characters, and idylls detached from the main current of her story. The whole mass of this historical literature is instinct with the spirit of criticism and vital with experience. The writers have been either actors or spectators of the drama. Trained in the study of antiquity, as well as in the council-chambers of the republic and in the courts of foreign princes, they survey the matter of their histories from a lofty vantage ground, fortifying their speculative conclusions by practical knowledge, and purifying their judgment of contemporary events with the philosophy of the past. Owing to this rare mixture of qualities, the Florentines deserve to be styled the discoverers of the historic method for the modern world. They first perceived that it is unprofitable to study the history of a state in isolation, that not wars and treaties only, but the internal vicissitudes of the commonwealth, form the real subject matter of inquiry,<sup>2</sup> and that the smallest details, biographical, economical, or topographical, may have the greatest value. While the rest of Europe was ignorant of statistics, and little apt to pierce below the surface of events to the secret springs of conduct, in Florence a body of scientific historians had gradually been formed, who recognised the necessity of basing their investigations upon a diligent study of public records, state-papers, and notes of contemporary observers.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Since the Greeks, no people have combined curiosity and the love of beauty, the scientific and the artistic sense, in the same proportions as the Florentines.

<sup>2</sup> See Machiavelli's critique of Lionardo d'Arezzo and Messer Poggio, in the Proemio to his *Florentine History*. His own conception of history, as the attempt to delineate the very spirit of a nation, is highly philosophical.

<sup>3</sup> The high sense of the requirements of scientific history attained by the Italians is shown by what Giovio relates of Gian Galeazzo's archives (*Vita di Gio. Galeazzo*, p. 107). After describing these, he adds: 'talche, chi volesse scrivere un' historia giusta non potrebbe desiderare altronde nè più abbondante nè più certa materia; perciocchè

The same men prepared themselves for the task of criticism by a profound study of ethical and political philosophy in the works of Aristotle, Plato, Cicero, and Tacitus.<sup>4</sup> They examined the methods of classical historians, and compared the annals of Greece, Rome, and Palestine with the chronicles of their own country. They attempted to divine the genius and to characterise the special qualities of the nations, cities, and individuals of whom they had to treat.<sup>5</sup> At the same time they spared no pains in seeking out persons possessed of accurate knowledge in every branch of inquiry that came beneath their notice, so that their treatises have the freshness of original documents and the charm of personal memoirs. Much, as I have elsewhere noted, was due to the peculiarly restless temper of the Florentines, speculative, variable, unquiet in their politics. The very qualities which exposed the commonwealth to revolutions developed the intelligence of her historians; her want of stability was the price she paid for intellectual versatility and acuteness unrivalled in modern times. "*O ingenia magis acria quam matura*," said Petrarch, and with truth, about the wits of the Florentines; for it is their property by nature to have more of liveliness and acumen than of maturity or gravity.<sup>6</sup>

The year 1300 marks the first development of historical research in Florence. Two great writers, Dante Alighieri and Giovanni Villani, at this epoch pursued different lines of study, which determined the future of this branch of literature for the Italians. It is not uncharacteristic of Florentine genius that while the chief city of Tuscany was deficient in historians of her achievements before the date which I have mentioned, her first essays in historiography should have been monumental and standard-making for the rest of Italy. Just as the great burghs of Lombardy obtained municipal independence somewhat earlier than those of Tuscany, so the historic sense developed itself in the valley of the Po at a period when the valley of the Arno had no chronicler. Sire Raul and Ottone Morena, the annalists of Milan, Fra Salimbene, the sagacious and comprehensive historian of Parma, Rolandino, to whom we owe the chronicle of Ezzelino and the tragedy of the Trevisan Marches, have no rivals south of the Apennines in the thirteenth century.

da questi libri facilissimamente si traggono le cagioni delle guerre, i consigli, e i successi dell' imprese.' The Proemio to Varchi's *Storie Fiorentine* (vol. i. pp. 42-44), which gives an account of his preparatory labours, is an unconscious treatise on the model historian. Accuracy, patience, love of truth, sincerity in criticism, and laborious research, have all their proper place assigned to them. Compare Guicciardini, *Ricordi*, No. cxliii., for sound remarks upon the historian's duty of collecting the statistics of his own age and country.

<sup>4</sup> The prefaces to Giannotti's critiques of Florence and of Venice show how thoroughly his mind had been imbued with the *Politics* of Aristotle. Varchi acknowledges the direct influence of Polybius and Tacitus. Livy is Machiavelli's favourite.

<sup>5</sup> On this point the *Relazioni* of Italian ambassadors are invaluable. What drily philosophical compendia are the notes of Machiavelli upon the French court and Cesare Borgia! How astute are the Venetian letters on the opinions and qualities of the Roman prelates!

<sup>6</sup> Guicc. *Ricordi*, cciii. *Op. Ined.* vol. i. p. 229.



Even the Chronicle of the Malespini family, written in the vulgar tongue from the beginning of the world to the year 1281, which occupies 146 columns of Muratori's Collection, and which used to be the pride of Tuscan antiquaries, has recently been shown to be in all probability a compilation based upon the Annals of Villani.<sup>7</sup> This makes the clear emergence of a scientific sense for history in the year 1300 at Florence all the more remarkable. In order to estimate the high quality of the work achieved by the Villani it is only necessary to turn the pages of some early chronicles of sister cities which still breathe the spirit of unintelligent mediæval industry, before the method of history had been critically apprehended. The naïveté of these records may be appreciated by the following extracts. A Roman writes<sup>8</sup>: 'I Lodovico Bonconte Monaldeschi was born in Orvieto, and was brought up in the city of Rome, where I have resided. I was born in the year 1327, in the month of June, at the time when the Emperor Lodovico came. Now I wish to relate the whole history of my age, seeing that I lived one hundred and fifteen years without illness, except that when I was born I fainted, and I died of old age, and remained in bed twelve months on end.' Burigozzo's Chronicle of Milan, again, concludes with these words:<sup>9</sup> 'As you will see in the Annals of my son, inasmuch as the death which has overtaken me prevents my writing more.' Chronicles conceived and written in this spirit are diaries of events, repertoires of strange stories, and old wives' tales, without a deep sense of personal responsibility, devoid alike of criticism and artistic unity. Very different is the character of the historical literature which starts into being in Florence at the opening of the fourteenth century.

Giovanni Villani relates how, having visited Rome on the occasion of the Jubilee, when 200,000 pilgrims crowded the streets of the Eternal City, he was moved in the depth of his soul by the spectacle of the ruins of the disrowned mistress of the world.<sup>10</sup> 'When I saw the great and ancient monuments of Rome, and read the histories and the great deeds of the Romans, written by Virgil, and by Sallust, and by Lucan, and by

<sup>7</sup> See Paul Scheffer-Boichorst, *Florentiner Studien*, Leipzig, 1874. Carl Hegel, in his defence of Compagni, *Die Chronik des Dino Compagni, Versuch einer Rettung*, Leipzig, 1875, admits the proof of spuriousness. See the preface, p. v. The point, however, is still disputed by Florentine scholars of high authority. Gino Capponi, in his *Storia della Repubblica di Firenze* (vol. i. Appendix, final note), observes that while the Villani are popular in tone the Malespini Chronicle is feudal. Adolfo Bartoli (*Storia della Lett. It.* vol. iii. p. 155) treats the question as still open. The custom of preserving brief *fasti* in the archives of great houses rendered such compilations as the Malespini Chronicle is now supposed to have been both easy and attractive. The Christian name *Ricordano* given to the first Malespini annalist does not exist. It has been suggested that it is due to a misreading of an initial sentence, *Ricordano i Malespini*.

<sup>8</sup> Muratori, vol. xii. p. 529.

<sup>9</sup> *Archo Stor.* vol. iii. p. 552. Both Monaldeschi and Burigozzo appear to mention their own death. The probability is that their annals, as we have them, have been freely dealt with by transcribers or continuators adopting the historic 'I' after the decease of the titular authors.

<sup>10</sup> Lib. viii. cap. 36.

Livy, and by Valerius, and Orosius, and other masters of history, who related small as well as great things of the acts and doings of the Romans, I took style and manner from them, though, as a learner, I was not worthy of so vast a work.' Like our own Gibbon, musing upon the steps of Ara Celi, within sight of the Capitol, and within hearing of the monks at prayer, he felt the *genius loci* stir him with a mixture of astonishment and pathos. Then 'reflecting that our city of Florence, the daughter and the creature of Rome, was in the ascendant toward great achievements, while Rome was on the wane, I thought it seemly to relate in this new Chronicle all the doings and the origins of the town of Florence, as far as I could collect and discover them, and to continue the acts of the Florentines and other notable things of the world in brief onwards so long as it shall be God's pleasure, hoping in Whom by His grace I have done the work rather than by my poor knowledge; and therefore in the year 1300, when I returned from Rome, I began to compile this book, to the reverence of God and Saint John and the praise of this our city Florence.' The keynote is struck in these passages. Admiration for the past mingles with prescience of the future. The artist and the patriot awake together in Villani at the sight of Rome and the thought of Florence.

The result of this visit to Rome in 1300 was the Chronicle which Giovanni Villani carried in twelve books down to the year 1346. In 1348 he died of the plague, and his work was continued on the same plan by his brother Matteo. Matteo in his turn died of the plague in 1362, and left the Chronicle to his son Filippo, who brought it down to the year 1365. On the three Villani, Giovanni is the greatest, both as a master of style and as an historical artist. Matteo is valuable for the general reflections which form exordia to the eleven books that bear his name. Filippo was more of a rhetorician. He is known as the public lecturer upon the Divine Comedy, and as the author of some interesting but meagre lives of eminent Florentines, his predecessors or contemporaries.

The Chronicle of the Villani is a treasure-house of clear and accurate delineations rather than of profound analysis. Not only does it embrace the whole affairs of Europe in annals which leave little to be desired in precision of detail and brevity of statement; but what is more to our present purpose, it conveys a lively picture of the internal condition of the Florentines and the statistics of the city in the fourteenth century. We learn, for example, that the ordinary revenues of Florence amounted to about 300,000 golden florins,<sup>11</sup> levied chiefly by way of taxes—90,200 proceeding from the octroi, 58,300 from the retail wine trade, 14,450 from the salt duties, and so on through the various imposts, each of which is carefully calculated. Then we are informed concerning the ordinary expenditure of the Commune—15,240 lire for the Podestà and his establishment, 5,880 lire for the Captain of the People

<sup>11</sup> xi. 62.

and his train, 3,600 for the maintenance of the Signory in the Palazzo, and so on down to a sum of 2,400 for the food of the lions, for candles, torches, and bonfires. The amount spent publicly in almsgiving; the salaries of ambassadors and governors; the cost of maintaining the state armoury; the pay of the night-watch; the money spent upon the yearly games when the palio was run; the wages of the city trumpeters; and so forth, are all accurately reckoned. In fact the ordinary Budget of the Commune is set forth. The rate of extraordinary expenses during war-time is estimated on the scale of sums voted by the Florentines to carry on the war with Martino della Scala in 1338. At that time they contributed 25,000 florins monthly to Venice, maintained full garrisons in the fortresses of the republic, and paid as well for upwards of 1,000 men-at-arms. In order that a correct notion of these balance-sheets may be obtained, Villani is careful to give particulars about the value of the florin and the lira, and the number of florins coined yearly. In describing the condition of Florence at this period, he computes the number of citizens capable of bearing arms, between the ages fifteen and seventy, at 25,000; the population of the city at 90,000, not counting the monastic communities, nor including the strangers, who are estimated at about 15,000. The country districts belonging to Florence add 80,000 to this calculation. It is further noticed that the excess of male births over female was between 300 and 500 yearly in Florence; that from 8,000 to 10,000 boys and girls learned to read; that there were six schools, in which from 10,000 to 12,000 children learned arithmetic; and four high schools, in which from 550 to 600 learned grammar and logic. Then follows a list of the religious houses and churches: among the charitable institutions are reckoned 30 hospitals capable of receiving more than 1,000 sick people. Here too it may be mentioned that Villani reckons the beggars of Florence at 17,000, with the addition of 4,000 paupers and sick persons and religious mendicants.<sup>12</sup> These mendicants were not all Florentines, but received relief from the city charities. The big wool factories are numbered at upwards of two hundred; and it is calculated that from sixty to eighty thousand pieces of cloth were turned out yearly, to the value in all of about 1,200,000 florins. More than 30,000 persons lived by this industry. The *calimala* factories, where foreign cloths were manufactured into fine materials, numbered about twenty. These imported some 10,000 piece of cloth yearly, to the value of 300,000 florins. The exchange offices are estimated at about eighty in number. The fortunes made in Florence by trade and by banking were colossal for those days. Villani tells us that the great houses of the Bardi and Peruzzi lent to our King Edward III. more than 1,365,000 golden florins.<sup>13</sup> 'And mark this,' he continues, 'that these moneys were chiefly the property of persons who had given it to them on deposit.' This debt was to have been recovered out of the wool revenues and other income of the English; in fact, the Bardi and Peruzzi

<sup>12</sup> x. 162.<sup>13</sup> xi. 88.

had negotiated a national loan, by which they hoped to gain a superb percentage on their capital. The speculation, however, proved unfortunate; and the two houses would have failed, but for their enormous possessions in Tuscany. We hear, for example, of the Bardi buying the villages of Vernia and Mangona in 1337.<sup>14</sup> As it was, their credit received a shock from which it never thoroughly recovered; and a little later on, in 1342, after the ruinous wars with the La Scala family and Pisa, and after the loss of Lucca, they finally stopped payment and declared themselves bankrupt.<sup>15</sup> The shock communicated by this failure to the whole commerce of Christendom is well described by Villani.<sup>16</sup> The enormous wealth amassed by Florentine citizens in commerce may be still better imagined when we remember that the Medici, between the years 1434 and 1471, spent some 663,755 golden florins upon alms and public works, of which 400,000 were supplied by Cosimo alone. But to return to Villani: not content with the statistics which I have already extracted, he proceeds to calculate how many bushels of wheat, hogsheads of wine, and head of cattle were consumed in Florence by the year and the week.<sup>17</sup> We are even told that in the month of July 1280, 40,000 loads of melons entered the gate at San Friano and were sold in the city. Nor are the manners and the costume of the Florentines neglected: the severe and decent dress of the citizens in the good old times (about 1260) is contrasted with the new-fangled fashions introduced by the French in 1342.<sup>18</sup> In addition to all this miscellaneous information may be mentioned what we learn from Matteo Villani concerning the foundation of the Monte or Public Funds of Florence in the year 1345,<sup>19</sup> as well as the remarkable essay upon the economical and other consequences of the plague of 1348, which forms the prelude to the continuation of his brother's Chronicle.<sup>20</sup>

In his survey of the result of the Black Death, Matteo notices not only the diminution of the population, but the alteration in public morality, the displacement of property, the increase in prices, the diminution of labour, and the multiplication of lawsuits, which were the consequences direct or indirect of the frightful mortality. Among the details which he has supplied upon these topics deserve to be commemorated the enormous bequests to public charities in Florence—350,000 florins to the Society of Orsammichele, 25,000 to the Compagnia della Misericordia, and 25,000 to the Hospital of Santa Maria Nuova. The poorer population had been almost utterly destroyed by the plague; so that these funds were for the most part wasted, misapplied, and preyed upon by maladministrators.<sup>21</sup> The foundation of the

<sup>14</sup> xi. 74. On this occasion a law was passed forbidding citizens to become lords of districts within the territory of Florence.

<sup>15</sup> xi. 38.

<sup>16</sup> xi. 88.

<sup>17</sup> xi. 04.

<sup>18</sup> vi. 69; xii. 4.

<sup>19</sup> iii. 1.

<sup>20</sup> i. 1-8.

<sup>21</sup> Matteo Villani expressly excepts the Hospital of S. Maria Nuova, which seems to have been well managed.

University of Florence is also mentioned as one of the extraordinary consequences of this calamity.

The whole work of the Villani remains a monument, unique in mediæval literature, of statistical patience and economical sagacity, proving how far in advance of the other European nations were the Italians at this period.<sup>22</sup> Dante's aim is wholly different. Of statistics and of historical detail we gain but little from his prose works. His mind was that of a philosopher who generalises, and of a poet who seizes salient characteristics, not that of an annalist who aims at scrupulous fidelity in his account of facts. I need not do more than mention here the concise and vivid portraits, which he has sketched in the Divine Comedy, of all the chief cities of Italy; but in his treatise 'De Monarchiâ' we possess the first attempt at political speculation, the first essay in constitutional philosophy, to which the literature of modern Europe gave birth; while his letters addressed to the princes of Italy, the cardinals, the emperor, and the republic of Florence, are in like manner the first instances of political pamphlets setting forth a rationalised and consistent system of the rights and duties of nations. In the 'De Monarchiâ' Dante bases a theory of universal government upon a definite conception of the nature and the destinies of humanity. Amid the anarchy and discord of Italy, where selfishness was everywhere predominant, and where the factions of the Papacy and Empire were but cloaks for party strife, Dante endeavours to bring his countrymen back to a sublime ideal of a single monarchy, a true *imperium*, distinct from the priestly authority of the Church, but not hostile to it—nay, rather seeking sanction from Christ's Vicar upon earth and affording protection to the Holy See, as deriving its own right from the same Divine source. Political science in this essay takes rank as an independent branch of philosophy, and the points which Dante seeks to establish are supported by arguments implying much historical knowledge, though quaintly scholastic in their application. The Epistles contain the same thoughts: peace, mutual respect, and obedience to a common head, the duty of the chief to his subordinates and of the governed to their lord, are urged with no less force, but in a more familiar style and with direct allusion to the events which called each letter forth. They are in fact political brochures addressed by a thinker from his solitude to the chief actors in the drama of history around him. Nor would it here be right to omit some notice of the essay 'De Vulgari Eloquentia,' which, considering the date of its appearance, is no less original and indicative of a new spirit in the world than the treatise 'De Monarchiâ.' It is an attempt to write the history of Italian as a member of the Romance Languages, to discuss the qualities of its several dialects, and to prove the advantages to be gained by the formation of a common literary tongue for Italy. Though Dante was of course devoid of what

<sup>22</sup> We must remember that our own annalists, Holinshed and Stow, were later by two centuries than the Villani.

we now call comparative philology, and had but little knowledge of the first beginnings of the languages which he discusses, yet it is not more than the truth to say that this essay applies the true method of critical analysis for the first time to the subject, and is the first attempt to reason scientifically upon the origin and nature of a modern language.

While discussing the historical work of Dante and the Villani, it is impossible that another famous Florentine should not occur to our recollection, whose name has long been connected with the civic contests that resulted in the exile of Italy's greatest poet from his native city. Yet it is not easy for a foreign critic to deal with the question of Dino Compagni's Chronicle—a question which for years has divided Italian students into two camps, which has produced a voluminous literature of its own, and which still remains undecided. The point at issue is by no means insignificant. While one party contends that we have in this Chronicle the veracious record of an eye-witness, the other asserts that it is the impudent fabrication of a later century, composed on hints furnished by Dante, and obscure documents of the Compagni family, and expressed in language that has little of the fourteenth century. The one regards it as a faithful narrative, deficient only in minor details of accuracy. The other stigmatises it as a wholly untrustworthy forgery, and calls attention to numberless mistakes, confusions, misconceptions, and misrepresentations of events, which place its genuineness beyond the pale of possibility. After a careful consideration of Scheffer's, Fanfani's, Gino Capponi's, and Isidore del Lungo's arguments, it seems to me clearly established that the Chronicle of Dino Compagni can no longer be regarded as a perfectly genuine document of fourteenth-century literature. In the form in which we now possess it, we are rather obliged to regard it as a *rifacimento* of some authentic history, compiled during the course of the fifteenth century in a prose which bears traces of the post-Boccaccian style of composition.<sup>23</sup> Yet the authority of Dino Compagni has long been such, and such is still the literary value of the monograph which bears his name, that it would be impertinent to dismiss the Chronicle unceremoniously as a mere fiction. I propose, therefore, first to give an account of the book on its professed merits, and then to discuss, as briefly as I can, the question of its authenticity.

<sup>23</sup> The first critic to call Compagni's authenticity in question was Pietro Fanfani, in an article of *Il Picvano Arolto*, 1858. The cause was taken up, shortly after this date, by an abler German authority, P. Scheffer-Boichorst. The works which I have studied on this subject are: 1. *Florentiner Studien*, von P. Scheffer-Boichorst, Leipzig, Hirzel, 1874. 2. *Dino Compagni vendicato dalla Calunnia di Scrittore della Cronica*, di Pietro Fanfani, Milano, Carrara, 1875. 3. *Die Chronik des Dino Compagni, Versuch einer Rettung*, von Dr. Carl. Hegel, Leipzig, Hirzel, 1875. 4. *Die Chronik des Dino Compagni, Kritik der Hegelschen Schrift* von P. Scheffer-Boichorst, Leipzig, Hirzel, 1875. 5. The note appended to Gino Capponi's *Storia della Repubblica di Firenze*. 6. *Dino Compagni e la sua Chronica*, per Isidoro del Lungo, Firenze, Le Monnier. Unluckily, the last-named work, though it consists already of two bulky volumes in large 8vo, is not yet complete; and the part which will treat of the question of authorship and MS. authority has not appeared.

The year 1300, which Dante chose for the date of his descent with Virgil to the nether world, and which marked the beginning of Villani's Chronicle, is also mentioned by Dino Compagni in the first sentence of the preface to his work. 'The recollections of ancient histories,' he says, 'have a long while stirred my mind to writing the perilous and ill-fated events which the noble city, daughter of Rome, has suffered many years, and especially at the time of the Jubilee in the year 1300.' Dino Compagni, whose Chronicle embraces the period between 1280 and 1312, took the popular side in the struggles of 1282, sat as Prior in 1289 and in 1301, and was chosen Gonfalonier of Justice in 1293. He was, therefore, a prominent actor in the drama of those troublous times. He died in 1324, two years and four months after the date of Dante's death, and was buried in the church of Santa Trinità. He was a man of the same stamp as Dante;<sup>24</sup> burning with love for his country, but still more a lover of the truth; severe in judgment, but beyond suspicion of mere partisanship; brief in utterance, but weighty with personal experience, profound conviction, prophetic intensity of feeling, sincerity, and justice. As a historian, he narrowed his labours to the field of one small but highly finished picture. He undertook to narrate the civic quarrels of his times, and to show how the commonwealth of Florence was brought to ruin by the selfishness of her own citizens; nor can his Chronicle, although it is by no means a masterpiece of historical accuracy or of lucid arrangement, be surpassed for the liveliness of its delineation, the graphic clearness of its characters, the earnestness of its patriotic spirit, and the acute analysis which lays bare the political situation of a republic torn by factions, during the memorable period which embraced the revolution of Giano della Bella and the struggles of the Neri and Bianchi. The comparison of Dino Compagni with any contemporary annalist in Italy shows that here again, in these pages, a new spirit has arisen. Muratori, proud to print them for the first time in 1726, put them on a level with the 'Commentaries' of Cæsar; Giordani welcomed their author as a second Sallust. The political sagacity and scientific penetration, possessed in so high a degree by the Florentines, appear in full maturity. Compagni's Chronicle heads a long list of similar monographs, unique in the literature of a single city.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> The apostrophes to the citizens of Florence at large, and the imprecations on some of the worst offenders among the party-leaders (especially in book ii, on the occasion of the calamities of 1303), are conceived and uttered in the style of Dante.

<sup>25</sup> Among these I may mention here Gino Capponi's history of the Ciompi Rebellion, Giovanni Cavalcanti's memoirs of the period between 1420 and 1452, Leo Battista Alberti's narrative of Porcari's attempt upon the life of Nicholas V., Vespasiano's Biographies, and Poliziano's 'Essay on the Pazzi Conspiracy.' Gino Capponi, born about 1350, was Prior in 1396, and Gonfalonier of Justice in 1401 and 1418; he died in 1421. Giovanni Cavalcanti was a zealous admirer of Cosimo de' Medici; he composed his Chronicle in the prison of the Stinche, where he was unjustly incarcerated for a debt to the Commune of Florence. Vespasiano da Bisticci contributed a series of most valuable portraits to the literature of Italy: all the great men of his time are there delineated with a simplicity that is the sign of absolute sincerity. Poliziano was present at the murder of Giuliano de' Medici in the Florentine Duomo. The historians of the sixteenth century will be noticed together further on.



The arguments against the authenticity of Dino Compagni's Chronicle may be arranged in three groups. The *first* concerns the man himself. It is urged that, with the exception of his offices as Prior and Gonfalonier, we have no evidence of his political activity, beyond what is furnished by the disputed Chronicle. According to his own account, Dino played a part of the first importance in the complicated events of 1280-1312. Yet he is not mentioned by Giovanni Villani, by Filippo Villani, or by Dante. There is no record of his death, except a MS. note in the Magliabecchian Codex of his Chronicle of the date 1514.<sup>26</sup> He is known in literature as the author of a few lyrics and an oration to Pope John XXII., the style of which is so rough and mediæval as to make it incredible that the same writer should have composed the masterly paragraphs of the Chronicle.<sup>27</sup> The *second* group of arguments affects the substance of the Chronicle itself. Though Dino was Prior when Charles of Valois entered Florence, he records that event under the date of Sunday the fourth of November, whereas Charles arrived on the first of November, and the first Sunday of the month was the fifth. He differs from the concurrent testimony of other historians in making the affianced bride of Buondelmonte dei Buondelmonti a Giantruffetti instead of an Amidei, and the Bishop of Arezzo a Pazzi instead of an Ubertini. He reckons the Arti at twenty-four, whereas they numbered twenty-one. He places the Coronation of Henry VII. in August, instead of June, 1312. He seems to refer to the Palace of the Signory, which could not have been built at the date in question. He asserts that a member of the Benivieni family was killed by one of the Galligai, whereas the murderer was of the blood of the Galli. He represents himself as having been the first Gonfalonier of Justice who destroyed the houses of rebellious nobles, while Baldo de' Ruffoli, who held the office before him, had previously carried out the Ordinances. Speaking of Guido Cavalcanti about the year 1300, he calls him 'uno giovane gentile;' and yet Guido had married the daughter of Farinata degli Uberti in 1266, and certainly did not survive 1300 more than a few months. The peace with Pisa, which was concluded during Compagni's tenure of the Gonfalonierate, is not mentioned, though this must have been one of the most important public events with which he was concerned. Chronology is hopelessly and inextricably confused; while inaccuracies and difficulties of the kind described abound on every page of the Chronicle, rendering the labour of its last commentator and defender one of no small difficulty. The *third* group of arguments

<sup>26</sup> This is Isidoro del Lungo's Codex A. The note occurs also in the Ashburnham MS. which Del Lungo refers to the fifteenth century.

<sup>27</sup> On this point it is worth mentioning that some good critics refer the poems to an elder Dino Compagni, who sat as Ancient in 1251. See the discussion of this question, as also of the authorship of the *Intelligenza*, claimed by Isidoro del Lungo for the writer of the Chronicle, in Borgognini's Essays (*Scritti Vari*, Bologna, Romagnoli, 1877, vol. i.). With regard to the oration to Pope John XXII. date 1326, it must be noted that this performance was first printed by Anton Francesco Doni in 1547, and that its genuineness may be disputed. See Carl Hegel, *op. cit.* pp. 18-22.

assails the language of the Chronicle and its MS. authority. Fanfani, who showed more zeal than courtesy in his destructive criticism, undertook to prove that Dino's style in general is not distinguished for the 'purity, simplicity, and propriety' of the trecento<sup>28</sup>; that it abounds in expressions of a later period, such as *armata* for *osten*, *mariciare* for *andare*, *acciò* for *acciocchè*, *onde* for *affinchè*; that numerous imitations of Dante can be traced in it; and that to an acute student of early Italian prose its palpable *quattrocentismo* is only slightly veiled by a persistent affectation of fourteenth-century archaism. This argument from style seems the strongest that can be brought against the genuineness of the Chronicle; for while it is possible that Dino may have made innumerable blunders about the events in which he took a part, it is incredible that he should have anticipated the growth of Italian by at least a century. Yet judges no less competent than Fanfani in this matter of style, and far more trustworthy as witnesses, Vincenzo, Nannucci, Gino Capponi, Isidore del Lungo, are of opinion that Dino's Chronicle is a masterpiece of Italian fourteenth-century prose; and till Italian experts are agreed, foreign critics must suspend their judgment. The analysis of style receives a different development from Sheffer-Boichorst. In his last essay he undertakes to show that many passages of the Chronicle, especially the important one which refers to the 'Ordinamenti della Giustizia,' have been borrowed from Villani.<sup>29</sup> This critical weapon is difficult to handle, for it almost always cuts both ways. Yet the German historian has made out an undoubtedly good case by proving Villani's language closer to the original 'Ordinamenti' than Compagni's. With regard to MS. authority, the codices of Dino's Chronicle extant in Italy are all of them derived from a MS. transcribed by Noferi Busini and given by him to Giovanni Mazzuoli, surnamed Lo Stradino, who was a member of the Florentine Academy and a greedy collector of antiquities. This MS. bears the date 1514. The recent origin of this parent codex, and the questionable character of Lo Stradino, gave rise to not unreasonable suspicions. Fanfani roundly asserted that the Chronicle must have been fabricated as a hoax upon the uncritical antiquary, since it suddenly appeared without a pedigree, at a moment when such forgeries were not uncommon. Scheffer-Boichorst, in his most recent pamphlet, committed himself to the opinion that either Lo Stradino himself, nicknamed *Cronaca Scorretta* by his Florentine cronies, or one of his contemporaries, was the forger.<sup>30</sup> An Italian impugner of the Chronicle, Giusto Grion of Verona, declared

<sup>28</sup> The most important of Fanfani's numerous essays on the Compagni controversy, together with minor notes by his supporters, are collected in the book quoted above, Note to p. 207. Fanfani exceeds all bounds of decency in the language he uses, and in his arrogant claims to be considered an unique judge of fourteenth-century style. These claims he bases in some measure upon the fact that he deceived the Della Crusca by a forgery of his own making, which was actually accepted for the *Archivio Storico*. See op. cit. p. 181.

<sup>29</sup> *Die Chronik*, &c., pp. 53-57.

<sup>30</sup> *Die Chronik*, &c., p. 39.

for Antonfrancesco Doni as the fabricator.<sup>31</sup> These hypotheses, however, are, to say the least, unlucky for their suggestors, and really serve to weaken rather than to strengthen the destructive line of argument. There exists an elder codex of which Fanfani and his followers were ignorant. It is a MS. of perhaps the middle of the fifteenth century, which was purchased for the Ashburnham Library in 1846. This MS. has been minutely described by Professor Paul Meyer; and Isidoro del Lungo publishes a facsimile specimen of one of its pages.<sup>32</sup> By some unaccountable negligence this latest and most determined defender of Compagni has failed to examine the MS. with his own eyes.

Thus stands the question of Dino Compagni's Chronicle. The defenders of its authenticity, forced to admit Compagni's glaring inaccuracies, fall back upon arguments deduced from the internal spirit of the author, from the difficulties of fabricating a personal narrative instinct with the spirit of the fourteenth century, from the hypotheses of a copyist's errors or of a thoroughgoing literary process of re-writing at a later date, from the absence of any positive evidence of forgery, and from general considerations affecting the validity of destructive criticism. One thing has been clearly proved in the course of the controversy: that the book can have but little historical value when not corroborated. Still there is a wide gap between inaccuracy and wilful fabrication. Until the best judges of Italian style are agreed that the Chronicle could not have been written in the second decade of the fourteenth century, the arguments adduced from an examination of the facts recorded in it are not strong enough to demonstrate a forgery. There is the further question of *cui bono?* which in all problems of literary forgery must first receive some probable solution. What proof is there that the vanity or the cupidity of any parties was satisfied by its production? A book exists in a MS. of about 1450, acquires some notice in a MS. of 1514, but is not published to the world until 1726. Supposing it to have been a forgery, the labour of concocting it must have been enormous. With all its defects, the Chronicle would still remain a masterpiece of historical research, imagination, sympathy with bygone modes of feeling, dramatic vigour, and antiquarian command of language. But who profited by that labour? Not the author of the forgery, since he was dead or buried more than two centuries before his fabrication became famous. Not the Compagni family; for there is no evidence to show that they had piqued themselves upon being the depositaries of their ancestor's masterpiece, nor did they make any effort at a period when the printing press was very active, to give the jewel of their archives to the public. If it be objected that, on the hypothesis of genuineness, the MS. of the Chronicle must have been divulged before

<sup>31</sup> See Hegel, *op. cit.* p. 6.

<sup>32</sup> See Del Lungo, *op. cit.* vol. ii. pp. 19-23, and facsimile, to face p. 1. This MS. was bought by G. Libri from the Pucci family in 1840, and sold to Lord Ashburnham. Del Lungo identifies it with a MS. which Braccio Compagni in the seventeenth century spoke of as *'la copia piu antica, appresso il Signor senatore Pandolfini.'*

the beginning of the sixteenth century, we can adduce two plausible answers. In the first place, Dino was the partisan of a conquered cause; and his family had nothing to gain by publishing an acrimonious political pamphlet during the triumph of his antagonists. In the second place, MSS. of greater literary importance disappeared in the course of the fourteenth century, to be reproduced when their subjects again excited interest in the literary world. This history of Dante's treatise 'De Vulgari Eloquentia' is a case in point. With regard to style, no foreigner can pretend to be a competent judge. Reading the celebrated description of Florence at the opening of Dino's Chronicle, I seem indeed, for my own part, to discern a post-Boccaccian artificiality of phrase. Still there is nothing to render it impossible that the Chronicle, as we possess it, in the texts of 1450 (?) and 1514, may be a *rifacimento* of an elder and simpler work. In that section of my history which deals with Italian literature of the fifteenth century, I shall have occasion to show that such remodelling of ancient texts to suit the fashion of the time was by no means unfrequent. The curious discrepancies between the 'Trattato della Famiglia' as written by Alberti, and as ascribed to *Pandilfini*, can only be explained upon the hypothesis of such *rifacimento*. If the historical inaccuracies in which the Chronicle abounds are adduced as convincing proof of its fabrication, it may be replied that the author of so masterly a romance would naturally have been anxious to preserve a strict accordance with documents of acknowledged validity. Consequently, these very blunders might not unreasonably be used to combat the hypothesis of deliberate forgery. It is remarkable, in this connection, that only one meagre reference is made to Dante by the Chronicler, who, had he been a literary forger, would scarcely have omitted to enlarge upon this theme. Without, therefore, venturing to express a decided opinion on a question which still divides the most competent Italian judges, I see no reason to despair of the problem being ultimately solved in a way less unfavourable to Dino Compagni than Scheffer-Boichorst and Fanfani would approve of. Considered as the fifteenth-century *rifacimento* of an elder document, the Chronicle would lose its historical authority, but would still remain an interesting monument of Florentine literature, and would certainly not deserve the unqualified names of 'forgery' and 'fabrication' that have been unhesitatingly showered upon it.<sup>33</sup>

The two chief Florentine historians of the fifteenth century are Lionardo Bruni, of Arezzo, and Poggio Bracciolini, each of whom, in his capacity of Chancellor to the Republic, undertook to write the

<sup>33</sup> It is to be hoped that the completion of Del Lungo's work may put an end to the Compagni controversy, either by a solid vindication of the Chronicle, or by so weak a defence as to render further partisanship impossible. So far as his book has hitherto appeared, it contains no signs of an ultimate triumph. The weightiest point contained in it is the discovery of the Ashburnham MS. If Del Lungo fails to prove his position, we shall be left to choose between Scheffer-Boichorst's absolute scepticism or the modified view adopted by me in the text.

annals of the people of Florence from the earliest date to his own time. Lionardo Aretino wrote down to the year 1404, and Poggio Bracciolini to the year 1455. Their histories are composed in Latin, and savour much of the pedantic spirit of the age in which they were projected.<sup>34</sup> Both of them deserve the criticism of Machiavelli, that they filled their pages too exclusively with the wars and foreign affairs in which Florence was engaged, failing to perceive that the true object of the historian is to set forth the life of a commonwealth as a continuous whole, to draw the portrait of a state with due regard to its especial physiognomy.<sup>35</sup> To this critique we may add that both Lionardo and Poggio were led astray by the false taste of the earlier Renaissance. Their admiration for Livy and the pedantic proprieties of a laboured Latinism made them pay more attention to rhetoric than to the substance of their work.<sup>36</sup> We meet with frigid imitations and bombastic generalities, where concise details and graphic touches would have been acceptable. In short, these works are rather studies of style in an age when the greatest stylists were but bunglers and beginners, than valuable histories. The Italians of the fifteenth century, striving to rival Cicero and Livy, succeeded only in becoming lifeless shadows of the past. History dictated under the inspiration of pedantic scholarship, and with the object of reproducing an obsolete style, by men of letters who had played no prominent part in the Commonwealth,<sup>37</sup> cannot pretend to the vigour and the freshness that we admire so much in the writings of men like the Villani, Gino Capponi, Giovanni Cavalcanti, and many others. Yet even after making these deductions, it may be asserted with truth that no city of Italy at this period of the Renaissance, except Florence, could boast historiographers so competent. Vespasiano at the close of his biography of Poggio estimates their labour in sentences which deserve to be remembered: 'Among the other singular obligations which the city of Florence owes to Messer Lionardo and to Messer Poggio, is this, that except the Roman Commonwealth no republic or free state in Italy has been so distinguished as the town of Florence, in having had two such notable writers to record its doings as Messer Lionardo and Messer Poggio; for up to the time of their histories everything was in the greatest obscurity. If the republic of Venice, which can show so many wise citizens, had the deeds which they have done by sea and land committed to writing, it would be far more illustrious even than it is now. And Galeazzo Maria, and Filippo Maria, and all the Visconti—their actions would

<sup>34</sup> Poggio's *Historia Populi Florentini* is given in the XXth volume of Muratori's collection. Lionardo's *Istoria Fiorentina*, translated into Italian by Donato Acciajuoli, has been published by Le Monnier (Firenze, 1861). The high praise which Ugo Foscolo bestowed upon the latter seems due to a want of familiarity.

<sup>35</sup> See the preface to the *History of Florence*, by Machiavelli.

<sup>36</sup> Lionardi Bruni, for example, complains in the preface to his history that it is impossible to accommodate the rude names of his personages to a polished style.

<sup>37</sup> Both Poggio and Lionardo began life as Papal secretaries; the latter was not made a citizen of Florence till late in his career.

also be more famous than they are. Nay, there is not any republic that ought not to give every reward to writers who should commemorate its doings. We see at Florence that from the foundation of the city to the days of Messer Lionardo and Messer Poggio there was no record of anything that the Florentines had done, in Latin, or history devoted to themselves. Messer Poggio follows after Messer Lionardo, and writes like him in Latin. Giovanni Villani, too, wrote an universal history in the vulgar tongue of whatsoever happened in every place, and introduces the affairs of Florence as they happened. The same did Messer Filippo Villani, following after Giovanni Villani. These are they alone who have distinguished Florence by the histories that they have written.<sup>38</sup> The pride of the citizen and a just sense of the value of history, together with sound remarks upon Venice and Milan, mingle curiously in this passage with the pedantry of a fifteenth-century scholar.

The historians of the first half of the sixteenth century are a race apart. Three generations of pedantic erudition and of courtly or scholastic trifling had separated the men of letters from the men of action, and had made literature a thing of curiosity. Three generations of the masked Medicean despotism had destroyed the reality of freedom in Florence, and had corrupted her citizens to the core. Yet, strange to say, it was at the end of the fifteenth century that the genius of the thirteenth revived. Italian literature was cultivated for its own sake under the auspices of Lorenzo de' Medici. The year 1494 marks the resurrection of the spirit of old liberty beneath the trumpet-blast of Savonarola's oratory. Amid the universal corruption of public morals, from the depth of sloth and servitude, when the reality of liberty was lost, when fate and fortune had combined to render constitutional reconstruction impossible for the shattered republics of Italy, the intellect of the Florentines displayed itself with more than its old vigour in a series of the most brilliant political writers who have ever illustrated one short but eventful period in the life of a single nation. That period is marked by the years 1494 and 1537. It embraces the two final efforts of the Florentines to shake off the Medicean yoke, the disastrous siege at the end of which they fell a prey to the selfishness of their own party-leaders, the persecution of Savonarola by Pope Alexander, the Church-rule of Popes Leo and Clement, the extinction of the elder branch of the Medici in its two bastards (Ippolito, poisoned by his cousin Alessandro, and Alessandro poignarded by his cousin Lorenzino), and the final eclipse of liberty beneath the Spanish-appointed dynasty of the younger Medicean line in Duke Cosimo. The names of the historians of this period are Niccolo Machiavelli, Jacopo Nardi, Francesco Guicciardini, Filippo Nerli, Donato Giannotti, Benedetto Varchi, Bernardo Segni, and Jacopo

<sup>38</sup> *Vite di Uomini Illustri*. Barbera, 1859; p. 425.

Pitti.<sup>39</sup> In these men the mental qualities which we admire in the Villani, Dante, and Compagni reappear, combined, indeed, in different proportions, tempered with the new philosophy and scholarship of the Renaissance, and permeated with quite another morality. In the interval of two centuries freedom has been lost. It is only the desire for freedom that survives. But that, after the apathy of the fifteenth century, is still a passion. The rectitude of instinct and the intense convictions of the earlier age have been exchanged for a scientific clairvoyance, a 'stoic-epicurean acceptance' of the facts of vitiated civilisation, which in men like Guicciardini and Machiavelli is absolutely appalling. Nearly all the authors of this period bear a double face. They write one set of memoirs for the public, and another set for their own delectation. In their inmost souls they burn with the zeal for liberty; yet they sell their abilities to the highest bidder—to Popes whom they despise, and to Dukes whom they revile in private. What makes the literary labours of these historians doubly interesting is that they were carried on for the most part independently; for though they lived at the same time, and in some cases held familiar conversation with each other, they gave expression to different shades of political opinion, and their histories remained in manuscript till some time after their death.<sup>40</sup> The student of the Renaissance has, therefore, the advantage of comparing and confronting a whole band of independent witnesses to the same events. Beside their own deliberate criticism of the drama in which all played some part as actors or spectators, we can use the not less important testimony they afford unconsciously, according to the bias of private or political interest by which they are severally swayed.

The 'Storia Fiorentina' of Varchi extends from the year 1527 to the year 1538; that of Segni from 1527 to 1555; that of Nardi from 1494 to 1552; that of Pitti from 1494 to 1529; that of Nerli from 1494 to 1537; that of Guicciardini from 1420 to 1509. The prefatory chapters, which in most cases introduce the special subject of each history, contain a series of retrospective surveys over the whole history of Florence extremely valuable for the detailed information they contain, as well as for the critical judgments of men whose acumen had been sharpened to the utmost by their practical participation in politics. It will not,

<sup>39</sup> The dates of these historians are as follows:—

	BORN	DIED
Machiavelli . . . . .	1469	1527
Nardi . . . . .	1476	1556
Guicciardini . . . . .	1482	1540
Nerli . . . . .	1485	1536
Giannotti . . . . .	1492	1572
Varchi . . . . .	1502	1565
Segni . . . . .	1504	1558
Pitti . . . . .	1519	1589

<sup>40</sup> Varchi, it is true, had Nardi's *History of Florence* and Guicciardini's *History of Italy* before him while he was compiling his *History of Florence*. But Segni and Nerli were given for the first time to the press in the last century; Pitti in 1842, and Guicciardini's *History of Florence* in 1859.



perhaps, be superfluous to indicate the different parts played by these historians in the events of their own time. Guicciardini, it is well known, had governed Bologna and Romagna for the Medicean Popes. He too was instrumental in placing Duke Cosimo at the head of the republic in 1536. At Naples, in 1535, he pleaded the cause of Duke Alessandro against the exiles before Charles V. Nardi on this occasion acted as secretary and advocate for Filippo Strozzi and the exiles; his own history was composed in exile at Venice, where he died. Segni was nephew of the Gonfalonier Capponi and shared the anxieties of the moderate liberals during the siege of Florence. Pitti was a member of the great house who contested the leadership of the republic with the Medici in the fifteenth century; his zeal for the popular party and his hatred of the Palleschi may still perhaps be tinged with ancestral animosity. Giannotti, in whose critique of the Florentine republic we trace a spirit no less democratic than Pitti's, was also an actor in the events of the siege, and afterwards appeared among the exiles. In the attempt made by the Cardinal Salviati (1537) to reconcile Duke Cosimo and the adherents of Filippo Strozzi, Giannotti was chosen as the spokesman for the latter. He wrote and died in exile at Venice. Nerli again took part in the events of those troublous times, but on the wrong side, by mixing himself up with the exiles and acting as a spy upon their projects. All the authors I have mentioned were citizens of Florence, and some of them were members of her most illustrious families. Varchi, in whom the flame of Florentine patriotism burns brightest, and who is by far the most copious annalist of the period, was a native of Monteverchi. Yet, as often happens, he was more Florentine than the Florentines; and of the events which he describes, he had for the most part been witness. Duke Cosimo employed him to write the history; it is a credit both to the prince and to the author that its chapters should be full of criticisms so outspoken, and of aspirations after liberty so vehement. On the very first page of his preface Varchi dares to write these words respecting Florence—'*divenne, dico, di stato piuttosto corrotto e licenzioso, tirannide, che di sana e moderata repubblica, principato*<sup>41</sup>;' in which he deals blame with impartial justice all round. It must, however, be remembered that at the time when Varchi wrote the younger branch of the Medici were firmly established on the throne of Florence. Between this branch and the elder line there had always been a coldness. Moreover, all parties had agreed to accept the duchy as a divinely appointed instrument for rescuing the city from her factions and reducing her to tranquillity.<sup>42</sup>

It would be beyond the purpose of this chapter to enter into the details of the history of Florence between 1527 and 1531—those years of her last struggle for freedom, which have been so admirably depicted

<sup>41</sup> 'It passed, I say, from the condition of a corrupt and ill-conducted commonwealth to tyranny, rather than from a healthy and well-tempered republic to principality.'

<sup>42</sup> See *Arch. Stor.* vol. i. p. xxxv.

by her great political annalists. It is rather my object to illustrate the intellectual qualities of philosophical analysis and acute observation for which her citizens were eminent. Yet a sketch of the situation is necessary in order to bring into relief the different points of view maintained by Segni, Nardi, Varchi, Pitti, and Nerli respectively.

At the period in question Florence was, according to the universal testimony of these authors, too corrupt for real liberty and too turbulent for the tranquil acceptance of a despotism. The yoke of the Medici had destroyed the sense of honour and the pride of the old noble families; while the policy pursued by Lorenzo and the Popes had created a class of greedy professional politicians. The city was not content with slavery; but the burghers, eminent for wealth or ability, were egotistical, vain, and mutually jealous. Each man sought advantage for himself. Common action seemed impossible. The Medicean party, or Palleschi, were either extreme in their devotion to the ruling house, and desirous of establishing a tyranny; or else they were moderate and anxious to retain the Medici as the chiefs of a dominant oligarchy. The point of union between these two divisions of the party was a prejudice in favour of class rule, a hope to get power and wealth for themselves through the elevation of the princely family. The popular faction on the other hand agreed in wishing to place the government of the city upon a broad republican basis. But the leaders of this section of the citizens favoured the plebeian cause from different motives. Some sought only a way to riches and authority, which they could never have opened for them under the oligarchy contemplated by the Palleschi. Others, styled Frateschi or Piagnoni, clung to the ideas of liberty which were associated with the high morality and impassioned creed of Savonarola. These were really the backbone of the nation, the class which might have saved the state if salvation had been possible. Another section, steeped in the study of ancient authors and imbued with memories of Roman patriotism, thought it still possible to secure the freedom of the state by liberal institutions. These men we may call the Doctrinaires. Their panacea was the establishment of a mixed form of government, such as that which Giannotti so learnedly illustrated. To these parties must be added the red republicans or Arrabbiati—a name originally reserved for the worst adherents of the Medici, but now applied to fanatics of Jacobin complexion—and the Libertines, who only cared for such a form of government as should permit them to indulge their passions.

Amid this medley of interests there resulted, as a matter of fact, two policies at the moment when the affairs of Florence, threatened by Pope and Emperor in combination, and deserted by France and the rest of Italy, grew desperate. One was that of the Gonfalonier Capponi, who advocated moderate counsels and an accommodation with Clement VII. The other was that of the Gonfalonier Carducci, who pushed things to extremities and used the enthusiasm of the Frateschi for sus-

taining the spirit of the people in the siege.<sup>43</sup> The latter policy triumphed over the former. Its principles were an obstinate belief in Francis, though he had clearly turned a deaf ear to Florence; confidence in the generals Baglioni and Colonna, who were privately traitors to the cause they professed to defend; and reliance on the prophecies of Savonarola, supported by the preaching of the Friars Foiano, Bartolommeo, and Zaccaria. Ill founded as it was in fact, the policy of Carducci had on its side all that was left of nobility, patriotism, and the fire of liberty among the Florentines. In spite of the hopelessness of the attempt, we cannot now read without emotion how bravely and desperately those last champions of freedom fought, to maintain the independence of their city at any cost, and in the teeth of overwhelming opposition. The memory of Savonarola was the inspiration of this policy. Ferrucci was its hero. It failed. It was in vain that the Florentines had laid waste Valdarno, destroyed their beautiful suburbs, and levelled their crown of towers. It was in vain that they had poured forth their treasures to the uttermost farthing, had borne plague and famine without a murmur, and had turned themselves at the call of their country into a nation of soldiers. Charles, Clement, the Palleschi, and Malatesta Baglioni—enemies without the city walls and traitors within its gates—were too powerful for the resistance of burghers who had learned but yesterday to handle arms and to conduct a war on their own account.<sup>44</sup> Florence had to capitulate. The venomous Palleschi, Francesco Guicciardini and Baccio Valori, by proscription, exile, and taxation, drained the strength and broke the spirit of the state. Cæsar and Christ's Vicar, a new Herod and a new Pilate, embraced and made friends over the prostrate corpse of sold and slaughtered liberty. Florence was paid as compensation for the insult offered to the Pontiff in the sack of Rome.

The part played by Filippo Strozzi in this last drama of the liberties of Florence is feeble and discreditable, but at the same time historically instructive, since it shows to what a point the noblest of the Florentines had fallen. All Pitti's invectives against the Ottimati, bitter as they may be, are justified by the unvarnished narrative we read in the pages of Varchi and Segni concerning this most vicious, selfish, vain, and brilliant hero of historical romance. Married to Clarice de' Medici, by whom he had a splendid family of handsome and vigorous sons, he was more than the rival of his wife's princely relatives by his wealth. Yet

<sup>43</sup> Guicciardini, writing his *Ricordi* during the first months of the siege, remarks upon the power of faith (*Op. Ined.* vol. i. p. 83. Compare p. 134): 'Esempio a' di nostri ne è grandissimo questa ostinazione de' Fiorentini, che essendosi contro a ogni ragione del mondo messi a aspettare la guerra del papa e imperadore, senza speranza di alcuno soccorso di altri, disuniti e con mille difficoltà, hanno sostenuto in quelle mura già sette mesi gli eserciti, e quali non si sarebbe creduto che avessino sostenuti sette dì; e condotto le cose in luogo che se vincessino, nessuno più se ne maraviglierebbe, dove prima da tutti erano giudicati perduti; e questa ostinazione ha causata in gran parte la fede di non potere perire, secondo le predicationi di Fra Jeronimo da Ferrara.'

<sup>44</sup> See above, p. 120, for what Giannotti says of the heroic Ferrucci.

though he made a profession of patriotism, Filippo failed to use this great influence consistently as a counterpoise to the Medicean authority. It was he, for instance, who advised Lorenzo the younger to make himself Duke of Florence. Distinguished, as he was, above all men of his time for wit, urbanity, accomplishments, and splendid living, his want of character neutralised these radiant gifts of nature. His private morals were infamous. He encouraged by precept and example the worst vices of his age and nation, consorting with young men whom he instructed in the arts of dissolute living, and to whom he communicated his own selfish Epicureanism. To him in a great measure may be attributed the corruption of the Florentine aristocracy in the sixteenth century. In his public action he was no less vacillating than unprincipled in private life. After prevailing upon Ippolito and Alessandro de' Medici to leave Florence in 1527, he failed to execute his trust of getting Pisa from their grasp (moved, it is said, by a guilty fondness for the young and handsome Ippolito), nor did he afterwards share any of the hardships and responsibilities of the siege. Indeed, he then found it necessary to retire into exile in France, on the excuse of superintending his vast commercial affairs at Lyons. After the restoration of the Medici he returned to Florence as the courtier of Duke Alessandro, whom he aided and abetted in his juvenile debaucheries. Quarrelling with Alessandro on the occasion of an insult offered to his daughter Luisa, and the accusation of murder brought against his son Piero, he went into opposition and exile, less for political than for private reasons. After the murder of Alessandro, he received Lorenzo de' Medici, the fratricide, with the title of 'Second Brutus' at Venice. Meanwhile it was he who paid the dowry of Catherine de' Medici to the Duke of Orleans, helping thus to strengthen the house of princes against whom he was plotting, by that splendid foreign alliance which placed a descendant of the Florentine bill-brokers on the throne of France. After all these vicissitudes Filippo Strozzi headed an armed attack upon the dominions of Duke Cosimo, was taken in the battle of Montemurlo, and finally was murdered in that very fortress, outside the Porto a Faenza, which he had counselled Alessandro to construct for the intimidation of the Florentines.<sup>45</sup> The historians with the exception of Nerli agree in describing him as a pleasure-loving and self-seeking man, whose many changes of policy were due, not to conviction, but to the desire of gaining the utmost license of disorderly living. At the same time we cannot deny him the fame of brilliant mental qualities, a princely bearing, and great courage.

The moral and political debility which proved the real source of the ruin of Florence is accounted for in different ways by the historians of the siege. Pitti, whose insight into the situation is perhaps the keenest,

<sup>45</sup> See Varchi, vol. iii. p. 61, for the first stone laid of this castle. It should be said that accounts disagree about Filippo's death. Nerli very distinctly asserts that he committed suicide. Segni inclines to the belief that he was murdered by the creatures of Duke Cosimo.

and who is by far the most outspoken, does not refer the failure of the Florentines to the cowardice or stupidity of the popular party, but to the malignity of the Palleschi, the double-dealing and egotism of the wealthy nobles, who to suit their own interests favoured now one and now another of the parties. These Ottimati—as he calls them, by a title borrowed from classical phraseology—whether they professed the Medicean or the popular cause, were always bent on self-aggrandisement at the expense of the people or their princes.<sup>46</sup> The sympathies of Pitti were on the side of the plebeians, whose policy during the siege was carried out by the Gonfalonier Carducci. At the same time he admitted the feebleness and insufficiency of many of these men, called from a low rank of life and from mechanical trades to the administration of the commonwealth. The state of Florence under Piero Soderini—that ‘non mai abbastanza lodato cavaliere,’ as he calls him—was the ideal to which he reverted with longing eyes. Segni, on the other hand, condemns the ambition of the plebeian leaders, and declares his opinion that the State could only have been saved by the more moderate among the influential citizens. He belonged in fact to that section of the Medicean party which Varchi styles the Neutrals. He had strong aristocratic leanings, and preferred a government of nobles to the popular democracy which flourished under Francesco Carducci. While he desired the liberty of Florence, Segni saw that the Republic could not hold its own against both Pope and Emperor, at a crisis when the King of France, who ought to have rendered assistance in the hour of need, was bound by the treaty of Cambray, and by the pledges he had given to Charles in the persons of his two sons. The policy of which Segni approved was that which Niccolo Capponi had prepared before his fall—a reconciliation with Clement through the intervention of the Emperor, according to the terms of which the Medici should have been restored as citizens of paramount authority, but not as sovereigns. Varchi, while no less alive to the insecurity of Carducci’s policy, was animated with a more democratic spirit. He had none of Segni’s Whig leanings, but shared the patriotic enthusiasm which at that supreme moment made the whole state splendidly audacious in the face of insurmountable difficulties. Both Segni and Varchi discerned the exaggerated and therefore baneful influence of Savonarola’s prophecies over the populace of Florence. In spite of continued failure, the people kept trusting to the monk’s prediction that, after her chastisement, Florence would bloom forth with double lustre, and that angels in the last resort would man her walls and repel the invaders. There is something pa-

<sup>46</sup> He goes so far as to assert that Leo X. and Clement VII. wished to give a liberal constitution to Florence, but that their plans were frustrated by the avarice and jealousy of the would-be oligarchs. See *Arch. Stor.* vol. i. pp. 121, 131. The passages quoted from his ‘Apologia de’ Cappucci,’ relative to Machiavelli, Filippo Strozzi, and Francesco Guicciardini (*Arch. Stor.* vol. i. pp. xxxix. xxxviii.), are very instructive; with such greedy self-seeking oligarchs, it was impossible for the Medicean Popes to establish any government but a tyranny in Florence.

thetic in this delusion of a great city, trusting with infantine pertinacity to the promises of the man whom they had seen burned as an imposter, when all the while their statesmen and their generals were striking bargains with the foe. Nardi is more sincerely Piagnone than either Segni or Varchi. Yet, writing after the events of the siege, his faith is shaken; and while he records his conviction that Savonarola was an excellent Nomothetes, he questions his prophetic mission, and deplores the effect produced by his vain promises. Nerli, as might have been expected from a noble married to Caterina Salviati, the niece of Leo and the aunt of Cosimo, who had himself been courtier to Clement and privy councillor to Alessandro, sustains the Medicean note throughout his commentaries.

Thus from these five authors, writing from different points of view, we gain a complete insight into the complicated politics of Florence, at a period when her vitality was still vigorous, but when she had lost all faculty for centralised or concerted action. In sagacity, in the power of analysis with which they pierce below the surface, trace effects to causes, discern character, and regard the facts of history as the proper subject-matter of philosophical reflection, they have much in common. He who has seen Rembrandt's painting of the dissecting-room might construct for himself another picture, in which the five grave faces of these patient observers should be bent above the dead and diseased body of their native city. Life is extinct. Nothing is left for science but, scalpel in hand, to lay bare the secret causes of dissolution. Each anatomist has his own opinion to deliver upon the nature of the malady. Each records the facts revealed by the autopsy according to his own impressions.

The literary qualities of these historians are very different, and seem to be derived from essential differences in their characters. Pitti is by far the most brilliant in style, concentrated in expression to the point of epigram, and weighty in judgment. Nardi, though deficient in some of the most attractive characteristics of the historian, is invaluable for sincerity of intention and painstaking accuracy. The philosophical, rhetorical, and dramatic passages which add so much splendour to the works of Guicciardini are absent from the pages of Nardi. He is anxious to present a clear picture of what happened; but he cannot make it animated, and he never reflects at length upon the matter of his history. At the same time he lacks the *naïveté* which makes Corio, Allegretti, Infessura, and Matarazzo so amusing. He gossips as little as Machiavelli, and has no profundity to make up for the want of piquancy. The interest of his chronicle is greatest in the part which concerns Savonarola, though even here the peculiarly reticent and dubitative nature of the man is obvious. While he sympathises with Savonarola's political and moral reforms, he raises a doubt about his inner sincerity, and does not approve of the attitude of the Piagnoni.<sup>47</sup> In his estimation of men

<sup>47</sup> Book ii. Cap. 16

Nardi was remarkably cautious, preferring always to give an external relation of events, instead of analysing motives or criticising character.<sup>48</sup> He is in especial silent about bad men and criminal actions. Therefore, when he passes an adverse judgment (as, for instance, upon Cesare Borgia), or notes a dark act (as the *stuprum* committed upon Astorre Manfredi), his corroboration of historians more addicted to scandal is important. Segni is far more lively than Nardi, while he is not less painstaking to be accurate. He shows a partisan feeling, especially in his admiration for Niccolò Capponi and his prejudice against Francesco Carducci, which gives the relish of personality that Nardi's cautiously dry chronicle lacks. Rarely have the entangled events of a specially dramatic period been set forth more lucidly, more succinctly, and with greater elegance of style. Segni is deficient, when compared with Varchi, only perhaps in volume, minuteness, and that wonderful mixture of candour, enthusiasm, and zeal for truth which makes Varchi incomparable. His sketches of men, critiques, and digressions upon statistical details are far less copious than Varchi's. But in idiomatic purity of language he is superior. Varchi had been spoiled by academic habits of composition. His language is diffuse and lumbering. He lacks the vivacity of epigram, selection, and pointed phrase. But his 'Storia Fiorentina' remains the most valuable repertory of information we possess about the later vicissitudes of the republic, and the charm of detail compensates for the lack of style. Nerli is altogether a less interesting writer than those that have been mentioned; yet some of the particulars which he relates, about Savonarola's reform of manners, for example, and the literary gatherings in the Rucellai gardens, are such as we find nowhere else.

Many of my readers will doubtless feel that too much time has been spent in the discussion of these annalists of the siege of Florence. Yet for the student of history they have a value almost unique. They suggest the possibilities of a true science of comparative history, and reveal a vivacity of the historic consciousness which can be paralleled by no other nation. How different might be our conception of the vicissitudes of Athens between 404 and 338 B.C. if we possessed a similar Pleiad of contemporary Greek authors!

Having traced the development of historical research and political philosophy in Florence from the year 1300 to the fall of the Republic, it remains to speak of the two greatest masters of practical and theoretical statecraft—Francesco Guicciardini and Niccolò Machiavelli. These two writers combine all the distinctive qualities of the Florentine historiographers in the most eminent perfection. At the same time they

<sup>48</sup> See lib. ii. cap. 34: 'Nel nostro scrivere non intendiamo far guidizio delle cose incerte, e massimamente della intenzione e animo segreto degli uomini, che non apparisce chiara se non per congettura e riscontro delle cose esteriori. E però stando fermo il primo proposito, vogliamo raccontare quanto più possibile ci sia, la verità delle cose fatte, più tosto che delle pensate o immaginate.' This is dignified and noble language in an age which admired the brilliant falsehoods of Giovo.



are, not merely as authors but also as men, mirrors of the times in which they both played prominent parts. In their biographies and in their works we trace the spirit of an age devoid of moral sensibility, penetrative in analysis, but deficient in faith, hope, enthusiasm, and stability of character. The dry light of the intellect determined their judgment of men, as well as their theories of government. On the other hand, the sordid conditions of existence to which they were subjected as the servants of corrupt states, or the instruments of wily princes—as diplomatists intent upon the plans of kings like Ferdinand or adventures like Cesare Borgia, privy councillors of such Popes as Clement VII. and such tyrants as Duke Alessandro de' Medici—distorted their philosophy and blunted their instincts. For the student of the sixteenth century they remain riddles, the solution of which is difficult, because by no strain of the imagination is it easy to place ourselves in their position. One half of their written utterances seem to be at variance with the other half. Their actions often contradict their most brilliant and emphatic precepts; while contemporaries disagree about their private character and public conduct. All this confusion, through which it is now perhaps impossible to discern what either Guicciardini or Machiavelli really was, and what they really felt and thought, is due to the anomaly of consummate ability and unrivalled knowledge of the world existing without religious or political faith, in an age of the utmost depravity of public and private morals. No criticism could be more stringent upon the contemporary disorganisation of society in Italy than is the silent witness of these men, sublimely great in all mental qualities, but helplessly adrift upon a sea of contradictions and of doubts, ignorant of the real nature of mankind in spite of all their science, because they leave both goodness and beauty out of their calculations.

Francesco Guicciardini was born in 1482. In 1505, at the age of twenty-three, he had already so distinguished himself as a student of law that he was appointed by the Signoria of Florence to read the Institutes in public. However, as he preferred active to professional work, he began at this time to practise at the bar, where he soon ranked as an able advocate and eloquent speaker. This reputation, together with his character for gravity and insight, determined the Signoria to send him on an embassy to the Court of Ferdinand of Aragon in 1512. Thus Guicciardini entered on the real work of his life as a diplomatist and statesman. We may also conclude with safety that it was at the court of that crowned hypocrite and traitor to all loyalty of soul that he learned his first lessons in political cynicism. The court of Spain under Ferdinand the Catholic was a perfect school of perfidy, where even an Italian might discern deeper reaches of human depravity and formulate for his own guidance a philosophy of despair. It was whispered by his enemies that here, upon the threshold of his public life, Guicciardini sold his honour by accepting a bribe from Ferdi-

nand.<sup>49</sup> Certain it is that avarice was one of his besetting sins, and that from this time forward he preferred expediency to justice, and believed in the policy of supporting force by clever dissimulation.<sup>50</sup> Returning to Florence, Guicciardini was, in 1515, deputed to meet Leo X. on the part of the Republic at Cortona. Leo, who had the faculty of discerning able men and making use of them, took him into favour, and three years later appointed him Governor of Reggio and Modena. In 1521 Parma was added to his rule. Clement VII. made him Viceroy of Romagna in 1523, and in 1526 elevated him to the rank of Lieutenant-General of the Papal army. In consequence of this high commission, Guicciardini shared in the humiliation attaching to all the officers of the League who, with the Duke of Urbino at their head, suffered Rome to be sacked and the Pope to be imprisoned in 1527. The blame of this contemptible display of cowardice or private spite cannot, however, be ascribed to him: for he attended the armies of the League not as general, but as counsellor and chief reporter. It was his business not to control the movements of the army so much as to act as referee in the Pope's interest, and to keep the Vatican informed of what was stirring in the camp. In 1531 Guicciardini was advanced to the governorship of Bologna, the most important of all the Papal lord-lieutenancies. This post he resigned in 1534 on the election of Paul III., preferring to follow the fortunes of the Medicean princes at Florence. In this sketch of his career I must not omit to mention that Guicciardini was declared a rebel in 1527 by the popular government on account of his well-known Medicean prejudices, and that in 1530 he had been appointed by Clement VII. to punish the rebellious citizens. On the latter occasion he revenged himself for the insult offered him in 1527 by the cruelty with which he pushed proscription to the utmost limits, relegating his enemies to unhealthy places of exile, burdening them with intolerable fines, and using all the indirect means which his ingenuity could devise for forcing them into outlawry and contumacy.<sup>51</sup> Therefore when he returned to inhabit Florence, he did so as the creature of the Medici, sworn to maintain the bastard Alessandro in his power. He was elected a member of the Senate of eighty; and so thoroughly did he espouse the cause of his new master, that he had the face to undertake the Duke's defence before Charles V. at Naples in 1535. On this occasion Alessandro, who had rendered himself unbearable by his despotic habits, and in particular by the insults which he offered to women of all ranks and conditions in Florence, was arraigned by the exiles before the bar of Cæsar. Guicciardini won the cause of his client, and restored Alessandro with an Imperial confirmation of his despotism to Florence. This period of his political career deserves particular attention, since it

<sup>49</sup> See the 'Apologia de' Cappucci,' *Arch. Stor.* vol. iv. part 2, p. 318.

<sup>50</sup> For the avarice of Guicciardini, see Varchi, vol. i. p. 318. His *Ricordi Politici* amply justify the second, though not the first, clause of this sentence.

<sup>51</sup> See Varchi, book xii. (and especially cap. xxv.), for these arts; he says, 'Nel che messer Francesco Guicciardini si scoperse più crudele e più appassionato degli altri.'

displays a glaring contradiction between some of his unpublished compositions and his actions, and confirms the accusations of his enemies.<sup>52</sup> That he should have preferred a government of Ottimati, or wealthy nobles, to a more popular constitution, and that he should have adhered with fidelity to the Medicean faction in Florence, is no ground for censure.<sup>53</sup> But when we find him in private unmasking the artifices of the Despots by the most relentless use of frigid criticism, and advocating a mixed government upon the type of the Venetian Constitution, we are constrained to admit with Varchi and Pitti that his support of Alessandro was prompted less by loyalty than by a desire to gratify his own ambition and avarice under the protective shadow of the Medicean tyranny.<sup>54</sup> He belonged in fact to those selfish citizens whom Pitti denounces, diplomatists and men of the world, whose thirst for power induced them to play into the hands of the Medici, wishing to suck the state<sup>55</sup> themselves, and to hold the prince in the leading-strings of vice and pleasure for their own advantage.<sup>56</sup> After the murder of Alessandro, it was principally through Guicciardini's influence that Cosimo was placed at the head of the Florentine Republic with the title of Duke. Cosimo was but a boy, and much addicted to field sports. Guicciardini therefore reckoned that, with an assured income of 12,000 ducats, the youth would be contented to amuse himself, while he left

<sup>52</sup> Knowing what sort of a tyrant Alessandro was, and remembering that Guicciardini had written (*Ricordi*, No. ccxlii.): 'La calcina con che si murano gli statì de' tiranni è il sangue de' cittadini: però dovrebbe sforzarsi ognuno che nella città sua non s'avessino a murare tali palazzi,' it is very difficult to approve of his advocacy of the Duke.

<sup>53</sup> Though even here the selfish ambition of the man was apparent to contemporaries: 'egli avrebbe voluto uno stato col nome d'Ottimati, ma in fatti de' Pochi, nel quale larghissima parte, per le sue molte e rarissime qualità, meritissimamente gli si veniva.'—Varchi, vol. i. p. 318.

<sup>54</sup> Guicciardini's *Storia Fiorentina* and *Reggimento di Firenze* (*Op. Ined.* vols. i. and iii.) may be consulted for his private critique of the Medici. What was the judgment passed upon him by contemporaries may be gathered from Varchi, vols. i. pp. 238, 318; ii. 410; iii. 204. Segni pp. 219, 332. Nardi, vol. ii. p. 287. Pitti, quoted in *Arch. Stor.* vol. i. p. xxxviii, and the 'Apologia de' Cappucci' (*Arch. Stor.* vol. iv. pt. 2). It is, however, only fair to Guicciardini to record here his opinion, expressed in *Ricordi*, Nos. ccxx. and cccxxx., that it was the duty of good citizens to seek to guide the tyrant: 'Credo sia ufficio di buoni cittadini, quando la patria viene in mano di tiranni, cercare d' avere luogo con loro per potere persuadere il bene, e detestare il male; e certo è interesse della città che in qualunque tempo gli uomini da bene abbino autorità; e ancora che gli ignoranti e passionati di Firenze l' abbino sempre intesa altrimenti, si accorgeranno quanto pestifero sarebbe il governo de' Medici, se non avessi intorno altri che pazzi e cattivi.'

<sup>55</sup> See Varchi, vol. iii. p. 204. 'Che Cosimo . . . succiarsi lo stato.'

<sup>56</sup> Pitti dips his pen in gall when he describes these citizens: 'Cotesti vogliosi Ottimati; i quali non hanno saputo mai ritrovare luogo che piaccia loro, sottomettendosi ora a' Medici per l' ingorda avarizia; ora gittandosi al popolo, per non potere a modo loro tiranneggiare; ora rivendendolo a' Medici, vedutisi scoperti e raffrenati da lui; e sempre mai con danno della Repubblica, e di ciascuna parte, inquieti, insaziabili e fraudulenti.'—'Apologia de' Cappucci,' *Arch. Stor.* iv. pt. ii. p. 215.

the government of Florence in the hands of his Vizier.<sup>57</sup> But here the wily politician overreached himself. Cosimo wore an old head on his young shoulders. With decent modesty and a becoming show of deference, he used Guicciardini as his ladder to mount the throne by, and then kicked the ladder away. The first days of his administration showed that he intended to be sole master in Florence. Guicciardini, perceiving that he game was spoiled, retired to his villa in 1537 and spent the last years of his life in composing his histories. The famous 'Istoria d' Italia' was the work of one year of this enforced retirement. The question irresistibly rises to our mind, whether some of the severe criticisms passed upon the Medici in his unpublished compositions were the fruit of these same bitter leisure hours.<sup>58</sup> Guicciardini died in 1540 at the age of fifty-eight, without male heirs.

Turning now from the statesman to the man of letters, we find in Guicciardini one of the most consummate historians of any nation or of any age. The work by which he is best known, the 'Istoria d' Italia,' is one that can scarcely be surpassed for masterly control of a very intricate period, for subordination of the parts to the whole, for calmness of judgment, and for philosophic depth of thought. Considering that Guicciardini in this great work was writing the annals of his own times, and that he had to disentangle the ravelled skein of Italian politics in the sixteenth century, these qualities are most remarkable. The whole movement of the history recalls the pomp and dignity of Livy, while a series of portraits sketched from life with the unerring hand of an anatomist and artist add something of the vivid force of Tacitus. Yet Guicciardini in this work deserves less commendation as a writer than as a thinker. There is a manifest straining to secure style, by manipulation and rehandling, which contrasts unfavourably with the unaffected ease, the pregnant spontaneity, of his unpublished writings. His periods are almost interminable, and his rhetoric is prolix and monotonous. We can trace the effort to emulate the authors of antiquity without the ease which is acquired by practice or the taste that comes with nature.

The transcendent merit of the history is this—that it presents us with a scientific picture of politics and of society during the first half of the sixteenth century. The picture is set forth with a clairvoyance

<sup>57</sup> Here is a graphic touch in Varchi's *History*, vol. iii. p. 202. Guicciardini is discussing the appointment of Cosimo de' Medici: 'Gli dovessero esser pagati per suo piatto ogn' anno 12,000 fiorini d' oro, e non più, avendo il Guicciardino, *abbassando il viso a alzando gli occhi*, detto: "Un 12,000 fiorini d'oro è—un bello spendere."'

<sup>58</sup> Pitti seems to have taken this view: see 'Apologia de' Cappucci' (*Arch. Stor.* vol. iv. part ii. p. 329): 'Tosto che 'l duca Cosimo lo pose a sedere insieme con certi altri suoi colleghi, si adirò malamente; e se la disputa della provvisione non l' avesse ritenuto, sarebbe ito a servire papa Pagolo terzo. Onde, restato confuso e disperato, si tratteneva alla sua villa di Santa Margarita a Montici; dove trasportato dalla stizza ritocco in molte parti la sua Istoria, per mostrare di non essere stato della setta Pallesea; e dove potette, accattò l' occasione di parere istrumento della Repubblica.' Guicciardini's own apology for his treatment of the Medici, in the proemio to the treatise *Del Reggimento di Firenze*, deserves also to be read.

and a candour that are almost terrible. The author never feels enthusiasm for a moment: no character, however great for good or evil, rouses him from the attitude of tranquil disillusioned criticism. He utters but few exclamations of horror or of applause. Faith, religion, conscience, self-subordination to the public good, have no place in his list of human motives; interest, ambition, calculation, envy, are the forces which, according to his experience, move the world. That the strong should trample on the weak, that the wily should circumvent the innocent, that hypocrisy and fraud and dissimulation should triumph, seems to him but natural. His whole theory of humanity is tinged with the sad grey colors of a stolid, cold-eyed, ill-contented, egotistical indifference. He is not angry, desperate, indignant, but phlegmatically prudent, face to face with the ruin of his country. For him the world was a game of intrigue, in which his friends, his enemies, and himself played parts, equally sordid, with grave faces and hearts bent only on the gratification of mean desires. Accordingly, though his mastery of detail, his comprehension of personal motives, and his analysis of craft are alike incomparable, we find him incapable of forming general views with the breadth of philosophic insight or the sagacity of a frank and independent nature. The movements of the eagle and the lion must be unintelligible to the spider or the fox. It was impossible for Guicciardini to feel the real greatness of the century, or to foresee the new forces to which it was giving birth. He could not divine the momentous issues of the Lutheran schism; and though he perceived the immediate effect upon Italian politics of the invasion of the French, he failed to comprehend the revolution marked out for the future in the shock of the modern nations. While criticising the papacy, he discerned the pernicious results of nepotism and secular ambition; but he had no instinct for the necessity of a spiritual and religious regeneration. His judgment of the political situation led him to believe that the several units of the Italian system might be turned to profit and account by the application of superficial remedies,—by the development of despotism, for example, or of oligarchy,—when in reality the disease of the nation was already past all cure.

Two other masterpieces from Guicciardini's pen, the '*Dialogo del Reggimento di Firenz*' and '*Storia Fiorentina*,' have been given to the world during the last twenty years. To have published them immediately after their author's death would have been inexpedient, since they are far too candid and outspoken to have been acceptable to the Medicean dynasty. Yet in these writings we find Guicciardini at his best. Here he has not yet assumed the mantle of the rhetorician, which in the '*Istoria d' Itali*' sits upon him somewhat cumbrously. His style is more spontaneous; his utterances are less guarded. Writing for himself alone, he dares to say more plainly what he thinks and feels. At the same time the political sagacity of the statesman is revealed in all its vigour. I have so frequently used both of these treatises that I need not enter into a minute analysis of their contents. It will be enough to

indicate some of the passages which display the literary style and the scientific acumen of Guicciardini at their best. The 'Reggimento di Firenz' is an essay upon the form of government for which Florence was best suited. Starting with a discussion of Savonarola's constitution, in which ample justice is done to the sagacity and promptitude by means of which he saved the commonwealth at a critical juncture (pp. 27-30), the interlocutors pass to an examination of the Medicean tyranny (pp. 34-39). This is one of the masterpieces of Guicciardini's analysis. He shows how the administration of justice, the distribution of public honours, and the foreign policy of the republic were perverted by this family. He condemns Cosimo's tyrannical application of fines and imposts (p. 68), Piero the younger's insolence (p. 46), and Lorenzo's appropriation of the public moneys to his private use (p. 43). Yet while setting forth the vices of this tyranny in language which even Sismondi would have been contented to translate and sign, Guicciardini shows no passion. The Medici were only acting as befitting princes eager for power, although they crushed the spirit of the people, discouraged political ardour, extinguished military zeal, and did all that in them lay to enervate the nation they governed. The scientific statist acknowledges no reciprocal rights and duties between the governor and the governed. It is a trial of strength. If the tyrant gets the upper hand, the people must expect to be oppressed. If, on the other side, the people triumph, they must take good care to exterminate the despotic brood: 'The one true remedy would be to destroy and extinguish them so utterly that not a vestige should remain, and to employ for this purpose the poignard or poison, as may be most convenient; otherwise the least surviving spark is certain to cause trouble and annoyance for the future' (p. 216). The same precise criticism lays bare the weakness of democracy. Men, says Guicciardini, always really desire their own power more than the freedom of the state (p. 50), and the motives even of tyrannicides are very rarely pure (pp. 53-54). The governments established by the liberals are full of defects. The Consiglio Grande, for example, of the Florentines is ignorant in its choice of magistrates, unjust in its apportionment of taxes, scarcely less prejudiced against individuals than a tyrant would be, and incapable of diplomatic foreign policy (pp. 58-60). Then follows a discussion of the relative merits of the three chief forms of government—the Governo dell' Uno, the Governo degli Ottimati, and the Governo del Popolo (p. 129). Guicciardini has already criticised the first and the third.<sup>59</sup> He now expresses a strong opinion that the second is the worst which could be applied to the actual conditions of the Florentine Republic

<sup>59</sup> Cf. *Ricordi*, cxi.: 'Chi disse uno popolo, disse veramente uno animale pazzo, pieno di mille errori, di mille confusioni, senza gusto, senza diletto, senza stabilità.' It should be noted that Guicciardini here and elsewhere uses the term *Popolo* in its fuller democratic sense. The successive enlargements of the burgher class in Florence, together with the study of Greek and Latin political philosophy, had introduced the modern connotation of the term.

(p. 130). His panegyric of the Venetian constitution (pp. 139-41) illustrates his plan for combining the advantages of the three species and obviating their respective evils. In fact he declares for that Utopia of the sixteenth century—the *Governo Misto*—a political invention which fascinated the imagination of Italian statesmen much in the same way as the theory of perpetual motion attracted scientific minds in the last century.<sup>60</sup> What follows is an elaborate scheme for applying the principles of the *Governo Misto* to the existing state of things in Florence. This lucid and learned disquisition is wound up (p. 188) with a mournful expression of the doubt which hung like a thick cloud over all the political speculations of both Guicciardini and Machiavelli: 'I hold it very doubtful, and I think it much depends on chance whether this disorganised constitution will ever take new shape or not . . . and as I said yesterday, I should have more hope if the city were but young; seeing that not only does a state at the commencement take form with greater facility than one that has grown old under evil governments, but things always turn out more prosperously and more easily while fortune is yet fresh and has not run its course,' &c.<sup>61</sup> In reading the 'Dialogue on the Constitution of Florence', it must finally be remembered that Guicciardini has thrown it back into the year 1494, and that he speaks through the mouths of four interlocutors. Therefore we may presume that he intended his readers to regard it as a work of speculative science rather than of practical political philosophy. Yet it is not difficult to gather the drift of his own meaning.

The '*Istoria Fiorentina*' is a succinct narrative of the events of Italian History, especially as they concerned Florence, between the years 1378 and 1509. In other words, it relates the vicissitudes of the Republic under the Medici, and the administration of the Gonfalonier Soderini. This masterpiece of historical narration sets forth with brevity and frankness the whole series of events which are rhetorically and cautiously unfolded in the '*Istoria d' Italia*.' Most noticeable are the characters of Lorenzo de' Medici (cap. ix.), of Savonarola (cap. xvii.), and of Alexander VI. (cap. xxvii.) The immediate consequences of the

<sup>60</sup> A lucid criticism of the three forms of government is contained in Guicciardini's Comment on the second chapter of the first book of Machiavelli's *Discorsi* (*Op. Ined.* vol. i. p. 6): 'E. non è dubio che il governo misto delle tre spezie, principi, ottimati e popolo, è migliore e più stabile che uno governo semplice di qualunque delle tre spezie, e massime quando è misto in modo che di qualunque spezie è tolto il buono e lasciato indietro il cattivo.' Machiavelli had himself, in the passage criticised, examined the three simple governments and declared in favour of the mixed as that which gave stability to Sparta, Rome, and Venice. The same line of thought may be traced in the political speculations of both Plato and Aristotle. The Athenians and Florentines felt the superior stability of the Spartan and Venetian forms of government, just as a French theorist might idealise the English constitution. The essential element of the *Governo Misto*, which Florence had lost beyond the possibility of regaining it, was a body of hereditary and patriotic patricians. This gave its strength to Venice; and this is that which hitherto has distinguished the English nation.

<sup>61</sup> Compare *Ricordi Politici e Civili*, No. cxxxix., for a lament of this kind over the decrepitude of kingdoms, almost sublime in its stoicism.



French invasion have never been more ably treated than in Chapter xi., while the whole progress of Cesare Borgia in his career of villainy is analysed with exquisite distinctness in Chapter xxvi. The wisdom of Guicciardini nowhere appears more ripe, or his intellect more elastic, than in the 'Istoria Fiorentina.' Students who desire to gain a still closer insight into the working of Guicciardini's mind should consult the 403 'Ricordi Politici e Civili' collected in the first volume of his 'Opere Inedite.' These have all the charm which belongs to occasional utterances, and are fit, like proverbs, to be worn for jewels on the finger of Time.

The biography of Niccolo Machiavelli consists for the most part of a record of his public services to the State of Florence. He was born on May 3, 1469, of parents who belonged to the prosperous middle class of Florentine citizens. His ancestry was noble; for the old tradition which connected his descent with the feudal house of Montespertoli has been confirmed by documentary evidence.<sup>62</sup> His forefathers held offices of high distinction in the commonwealth; and though their wealth and station had decreased, Machiavelli inherited a small landed estate. His family, who were originally settled in the Val di Pesa, owned farms at San Casciano and in other villages of the Florentine dominion, a list of which may be seen in the return presented by his father Bernardo to the revenue office in 1498.<sup>63</sup> Their wealth was no doubt trivial in comparison with that which citizens amassed by trade in Florence; for it was not the usage of those times to draw more than the necessities of life from the Villa: all superfluities were provided by the Bottega in the town.<sup>64</sup> Yet there can be no question, after a comparison of Bernardo Machiavelli's return of his landed property with Niccolo Machiavelli's will,<sup>65</sup> that the illustrious war secretary at all periods of his life owned just sufficient property to maintain his family in a decent, if not a dignified, style. About his education we know next to nothing. Giovo<sup>66</sup> asserts that he possessed but little Latin, and that he owed the show of learning in his works to quotations furnished by Marcellus Virgilius. This accusation, which, whether it be true or not, was intended to be injurious, has lost its force in an age that, like ours, values erudition less than native genius. It is certain that Machiavelli knew quite enough of Latin and Greek literature to serve his turn; and his familiarity with some of the classical historians and philosophers is intimate. There is even too much parade in his works of illustrations borrowed from Polybius, Livy, and Plutarch: the only question is whether Machiavelli relied upon translations rather than the originals. On this point,

<sup>62</sup> See Villari's *Machiavelli*, vol. i. p. 303. Ed. Le Monnier.

<sup>63</sup> See vol. i. of the edition of Machiavelli, by Mess. Fanfani and Passerini, Florence, 1873; p. lv. Villari's *Machiavelli*, ib. p. 306. The income is estimated at about 180*l*.

<sup>64</sup> See Pandolfini, *Trattato del Governo della Farniglia*.

<sup>65</sup> Fanfani and Passerini's edition, vol. i. p. xcii.

<sup>66</sup> *Elogia*, cap. 87.

it is also worthy of remark that his culture was rather Roman than Hellenic. Had he at any period of his life made as profound a study of Plato's political dialogues as he made of Livy's histories, we cannot but feel that his theories both of government and statecraft might have been more concordant with a sane and normal humanity.

In 1494 the date of the expulsion of the Medici, Machiavelli was admitted to the Chancery of the Commune as a clerk; and in 1498 he was appointed to the post of chancellor and secretary to the *Dieci di libertà e pace*. This place he held for the better half of fifteen years; that is to say, during the whole period of Florentine freedom. His diplomatic missions undertaken at the instance of the Republic were very numerous. Omitting those of less importance, we find him at the camp of Cesare Borgia in 1502, in France in 1504, with Julius II. in 1506, with Emperor Maximilian in 1507, and again at the French Court in 1510.<sup>67</sup> To this department of his public life belong the despatches and Relazioni which he sent home to the Signory of Florence, his Monograph upon the Massacre of Sinigaglia, his treatises upon the method of dealing with Pisa, Pistoja, and Valdichiana, and those two remarkable studies of foreign nations, which are entitled 'Ritratti delle Cose dell' Alemagna' and 'Ritratti delle Cose di Francia.' It was also in the year 1500 that he laid the first foundations of his improved military system. The political sagacity and the patriotism for which Machiavelli has been admired are nowhere more conspicuous than in the discernment which suggested this measure, and in the indefatigable zeal with which he strove to carry it into effect. Pondering upon the causes of Italian weakness when confronted with nations like the French, and comparing contemporary with ancient history, Machiavelli came to the conclusion that the universal employment of mercenary troops was the chief secret of the insecurity of Italy. He therefore conceived a plan for establishing a national militia, and for placing the whole male population at the service of the state in times of war. He had to begin cautiously in bringing this scheme before the public; for the stronghold of the mercenary system was the sloth and luxury of the burghers. At first he induced the *Dieci di libertà e pace*, or war office, to require the service of one man per house throughout the Florentine dominion; but at the same time he caused a census to be taken of all men capable of bearing arms. His next step was to carry a law by which the permanent militia of the state was fixed at 10,000. Then in 1503, having prepared the way by these preliminary measures, he addressed the Council of the Burghers in a set oration, unfolding the principles of his proposed reform, and appealing not only to their patriotism but also to their sense of self-preservation. It was his aim to prove that mercenary arms must be exchanged for a national militia, if freedom and independence were to be

<sup>67</sup> Machiavelli never bore the title of Ambassador on these missions. He went as Secretary. His pay was miserable. We find him receiving one ducat a day for maintenance.

maintained. The Florentines allowed themselves to be convinced, and, on the recommendation of Machiavelli, they voted in 1506 a new magistracy, called the *Nove dell' Ordinanza e Milizia*, for the formation of companies, the discipline of soldiers, and the maintenance of the militia in a state of readiness for active service.<sup>68</sup> Machiavelli became the secretary of this board; and much of his time was spent thenceforth in the levying of troops and the practical development of his system. It requires an intimate familiarity with the Italian military system of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries to understand the importance of this reform. We are so accustomed to the systems of Militia, Conscription, and Landwehr, by means of which military service has been nationalised among the modern races, that we need to tax our imagination before we can place ourselves at the point of view of men to whom Machiavelli's measure was a novelty of genius.<sup>69</sup>

It must be admitted that the new militia proved ineffectual in the hour of need. To revive the martial spirit of a nation, enervated by tyranny and given over to commerce merely by a stroke of genius, was beyond the force of even Machiavelli. When Prato had been sacked in 1512, the Florentines, destitute of troops, divided among themselves, and, headed by the excellent but hesitating Piero Soderini, threw their gates open to the Medici. Giuliano, the brother of Pope Leo, and Lorenzo, his nephew, whose statues sit throned in the immortality of Michael Angelo's marble upon their tombs in San Lorenzo, disposed of the Republic at their pleasure. Machiavelli, as War Secretary of the anti-Medicean government, was of course disgraced and deprived of his appointments. In 1513 he was suspected of complicity in the conjuration of Pietropaolo Boscoli and Agostino Capponi, was imprisoned in the Bargello, and tortured to the extent of four turns of the rack. It seems that he was innocent. Leo X. released him by the act of amnesty passed upon the event of his assuming the tiara; and Machiavelli immediately retired to his farm near San Casciano.

Since we are now approaching the most critical passage of Machiavelli's biography, it may be well to draw from his private letters a picture of the life to which this statesman of the restless brain was con-

<sup>68</sup> Documents relating to the institution of the *Nove dell' Ordinanza e Milizia*, and to its operations between December 6, 1506, and August 6, 1512, from the pen of Machiavelli, will be found printed by Signor Canestrini in *Arch. Stor.* vol. xv. pp. 377 to 453. Machiavelli's treatise *De re militari*, or *I libri sull' arte della guerra*, was the work of his later life; it was published in 1521 at Florence.

<sup>69</sup> Though Machiavelli deserves the credit of this military system the part of Antonio Giacomini in carrying it into effect must not be forgotten. Pitti, in his 'Life of Giacomini' (*Arch. Stor.* vol. iv. pt. ii. p. 241), says: 'Avendo per dieci anni continovi fatto prova nelle fazioni e nelle battaglie de' fanti del dominio e delli esterni, aveva troppo bene conosciuto con quanta più sicurezza si potesse la repubblica servire de' suoi propri che delli istranieri.' Machiavelli had gone as Commissary to the camp of Giacomini before Pisa in August 1505; there the man of action and the man of theory came to an agreement: both found in the Gonfalonier Soderini a chief of the Republic capable of entering into their views.

demned in the solitude of the country.<sup>70</sup> Writing on December 10 to his friend Francesco Vettori, he says, 'I am at my farm; and, since my last misfortunes, have not been in Florence twenty days. I rise with the sun, and go into a wood of mine that is being cut, where I remain two hours inspecting the work of the previous day and conversing with the woodcutters, who have always some trouble on hand among themselves or with their neighbours. When I leave the wood, I proceed to a well, and thence to the place which I use for snaring birds, with a book under my arm—Dante, or Petrarch, or one of the minor poets, like Tibullus or Ovid. I read the story of their passions, and let their loves remind me of my own, which is a pleasant pastime for a while. Next I take the road, enter the inn door, talk with the passers-by, inquire the news of the neighbourhood, listen to a variety of matters, and make note of the different tastes and humours of men. This brings me to dinner-time, when I join my family and eat the poor produce of my farm. After dinner I go back to the inn, where I generally find the host and a butcher, a miller, and a pair of bakers. With these companions I play the fool all day at cards or backgammon: a thousand squabbles, a thousand insults and abusive dialogues take place, while we haggle over a farthing, and shout loud enough to be heard from San Casciano. But when evening falls I go home and enter my writing-room. On the threshold I put off my country habit, filthy with mud and mire, and array myself in royal courtly garments; thus worthily attired, I make my entrance into the ancient courts of the men of old, where they receive me with love, and where I feed upon that food which only is my own and for which I was born. I feel no shame in conversing with them and asking them the reason for their actions. They, moved by their humanity, make answer; for four hours' space I feel no annoyance, forget all care; poverty cannot frighten, nor death appal me. I am carried away to their society. And since Dante says "that there is no science unless we retain what we have learned." I have set down what I have gained from their discourse, and composed a treatise, "*De Principatibus*," in which I enter as deeply as I can into the science of the subject, with reasonings on the nature of principality, its several species, and how they are acquired, how maintained, how lost. If you ever liked any of my scribblings, this ought to suit your taste. To a prince, and especially to a new prince, it ought to prove acceptable. Therefore I am dedicating it to the Magnificence of Giuliano.'

<sup>70</sup> This letter may be compared with others of about the same date. In one (Aug. 3, 1514) he says: 'Ho lasciato dunque i pensieri delle cose grandi e gravi; non mi diletta più leggere le cose antiche, nè ragionare delle moderne; tutte si son converse in ragionamenti dolci,' &c. Again he writes (Dec. 4, 1514): 'Quod autem ad me pertinet, si quid agam scire cupis, omnem meae vitae rationem ab eodem Tafano intelliges, quam sordidam ingloriamque, non sine indignatione, si me ut soles amas, cognoscas.' Later on, we may notice the same language. Thus (Feb. 5, 1515), 'Sono diventato inutile a me, a' parenti ed agli amici,' and (June 8, 1517) 'Essendomi io ridotto a stare in villa per le avversità che io ho avuto ed ho, sto qualche volta un mese che non mi ricordo di me.'

Further on in the same letter he writes: 'I have talked with Filippo Casavecchia about this little work of mine, whether I ought to present it or not; and if so, whether I ought to send or take it myself to him. I was induced to doubt about presenting it at all by the fear lest Giuliano should not even read it, and that this Ardinghelli should profit by my latest labours. On the other hand, I am prompted to present it by the necessity which pursues me, seeing that I am consuming myself in idleness, and I cannot continue long in this way without becoming contemptible through poverty. I wish these Signori Medici would begin to make some use of me, if it were only to set me to the work of rolling a stone.<sup>71</sup> If I did not win them over to me afterwards, I should only complain of myself. As for my book, if they read it, they would perceive that the fifteen years I have spent in studying statecraft have not been wasted in sleep or play; and everybody ought to be glad to make use of a man who has so filled himself with experience at the expense of others. About my fidelity they ought not to doubt. Having always kept faith, I am not going to learn to break it now. A man who has been loyal and good for forty-three years, like me, is not likely to change his nature; and of my loyalty and goodness my poverty is sufficient witness to them.'

This letter, invaluable to the student of Machiavelli's work, is prejudicial to his reputation. It was written only ten months after he had been imprisoned and tortured by the Medici, just thirteen months after the Republic he had served so long had been enslaved by the princes before whom he was now cringing. It is true that Machiavelli was not wealthy; his habits of prodigality made his fortune insufficient for his needs.<sup>72</sup> It is true that he could ill bear the enforced idleness of country life, after being engaged for fifteen years in the most important concerns of the Florentine Republic. But neither his poverty, which, after all, was but comparative, nor his inactivity, for which he found relief in study, justifies the tone of the conclusion of the letter. When we read it, we cannot help remembering the language of another exile, who while he tells us—

come sa di sale  
Lo pane altrui, e com' è duro calle  
Lo scendere e 'l salir per l' altrui scale.

—can yet refuse the advances of his factious city thus: 'If Florence cannot be entered honourably, I will never set foot within her walls.

<sup>71</sup> Compare the letter, dated June 10, 1514, to Fr. Vettori: 'Starommi dunque così tra i miei cenci, senza trovare uomo che della mia servitù si ricordi, o che creda che io possa esser buono a nulla. Ma egli è impossibile che io possa star molto così, perchè io m'è logoro,' &c. Again, Dec. 20, 1514: 'E se la fortuna avesse voluto che i Medici, o in cosa di Firenze o di fuori, o in cose loro particolari o in pubbliche, mi avessino una volta comandato, io sarei contento.'

<sup>72</sup> See familiar letter, June 10, 1514.

And what? Shall I not be able from any angle whatsoever of the earth to gaze upon the sun and stars? Shall I not beneath whatever region of the heavens have power to meditate the sweetest truths, unless I make myself ignoble first, nay ignominious, in the face of Florence and her people? Nor will bread, I warrant, fail me!’ If Machiavelli, who in this very letter to Vettori quoted Dante, had remembered these words, they ought to have fallen like drops of molten lead upon his soul. But such was the debasement of the century that probably he would have only shrugged his shoulders and sighed, ‘Tempora mutantur, nos et mutamur in illis.’

In some respects Dante, Machiavelli, and Michael Angelo Buonarroti may be said to have been the three greatest intellects produced by Florence. Dante, in exile and in opposition, would hold no sort of traffic with her citizens. Michael Angelo, after the siege, worked at the Medici tombs for Pope Clement, as a makepeace offering for the fortification of Samminiato; while Machiavelli entreats to be put *to roll a stone by these Signori Medici*, if only he may so escape from poverty and dulness. Michael Angelo, we must remember, owed a debt of gratitude as an artist to the Medici for his education at the gardens of Lorenzo. Moreover, the quatrain which he wrote for his statue of the Night justifies us in regarding that chapel as the cenotaph designed by him for murdered Liberty. Machiavelli owed nothing to the Medici, who had disgraced and tortured him, and whom he had opposed in all his public action during fifteen years. Yet what was the gift with which he came before them as a suppliant, crawling to the footstool of their throne? A treatise ‘De Principatibus;’ in other words, the celebrated ‘Principe;’ which, misread it as Machiavelli’s apologists may choose to do, or explain it as the rational historian is bound to do, yet carries venom in its pages. Remembering the circumstances under which it was composed, we are in a condition to estimate the proud humility and prostrate pride of the dedication. ‘Niccolo Machiavelli to the Magnificent Lorenzo, son of Piero de’ Medici;’ so runs the title. ‘Desiring to present myself to your Magnificence with some proof of my devotion, I have not found among my various furniture aught that I prize more than the knowledge of the actions of great men acquired by me through a long experience of modern affairs and a continual study of ancient. These I have long and diligently revolved and examined in my mind, and have now compressed into a little book which I send to your Magnificence. And though I judge this work unworthy of your presence, yet I am confident that your humanity will cause you to value it when you consider that I could not make you a greater gift than this of enabling you in a few hours to understand what I have learned through perils and discomforts in a lengthy course of years.’ ‘If your Magnificence will deign, from the summit of your height, some time to turn your eyes to my low place, you will know how unjustly I am forced to endure the great and continued malice of fortune.’ The work so dedicated was sent in MS. for

the Magnificent's private perusal. It was not published until 1532, by order of Clement VII., after the death of Machiavelli.

I intend to reserve the 'Principe,' considered as the supreme expression of Italian political science, for a separate study; and after the introduction to Macaulay's Essay on Machiavelli, I need hardly enter in detail into a discussion of the various theories respecting the intention of this treatise.<sup>73</sup> Yet this is the proper place for explaining my view about Machiavelli's writing in relation to his biography, and for attempting to connect them into such unity as a mind so strictly logical as his may have designed.

With regard to the circumstances under which the 'Prince' was composed, enough has already been said. Machiavelli's selfish purpose in putting it forth seems to my mind apparent. He wanted employment: he despaired of the Republic: he strove to furnish the princes in power with a convincing proof of his capacity for great affairs. Yet it must not on this account be concluded that the 'Principe' was merely a cheap bid for office. On the contrary, it contained the most mature and the most splendid of Machiavelli's thoughts, accumulated through his long years of public service; and strange as it may seem, it embodied the dream of a philosophical patriot for the restitution of liberty to Italy. Florence, indeed, was lost. 'These Signori Medici' were in power. But could even they be employed to purge the sacred soil of Italy from the Barbarians?

If we can pretend to sound the depths of Machiavelli's mind at this distance of time, we may conjecture that he had come to believe the free cities too corrupt for independence. The only chance Italy had of holding her own against the great powers of Europe was by union under a prince. At the same time the Utopia of this union, with which he closes the 'Principe,' could only be realised by such a combination as would either neutralise the power of the Church, or else gain the Pope for an ally by motives of interest. Now at the period of the dedication of the 'Principe' to Lorenzo de' Medici, Leo X. was striving to found a principality in the States of the Church.<sup>74</sup> In 1516 he created his nephew Duke of Urbino, and it was thought that this was but a

<sup>73</sup> Macaulay's essay is, of course, brilliant and comprehensive. I do not agree with his theory of the Italian Despot, as I have explained on pp. 64, 65 of this volume. Sometimes, too, he indulges in rhetoric that is merely sentimental, as when he says about the dedication of the Florentine History to Clement: 'The miseries and humiliations of dependence, the bread which is more bitter than every other food, the stairs which are more painful than every other ascent, had not broken the spirit of Machiavelli. *The most corrupting post in a corrupting profession had not depraved the generous heart of Clement.*' The sentence I have printed in italics may perhaps tell the truth about the Church and Popes in general; but the panegyric of Clement is preposterous. Macaulay must have been laughing in his sleeve.

<sup>74</sup> We are, however, bound to remember that Leo was only made Pope in March 1513, and that the *Principe* was nearly finished in the following December. Machiavelli cannot therefore be credited with knowing as well as we do now to what length the ambition of the Medici was about to run when he composed his work. He wrote in the hope that it might induce them to employ him.



prelude to still further greatness. Florence in combination with Rome might do much for Italy. Leo meanwhile was still young, and his participation in the most ambitious schemes was to be expected. Thus the moment was propitious for suggesting to Lorenzo that he should put himself at the head of an Italian kingdom, which, by its union beneath the strong will of a single prince, might suffice to cope with the nations more potent in numbers and in arms.<sup>75</sup> The 'Principe' was therefore dedicated in good faith to the Medici, and the note on which it closes was not false. Machiavelli hoped that what Cesare Borgia had but just failed in accomplishing, Lorenzo de' Medici, with the assistance of a younger Pope than Alexander, a firmer basis to his principedom in Florence, and a grasp upon the States of the Church made sure by the policy of Julius II., might effect. Whether so good a judge of character as Machiavelli expected really much from Lorenzo may be doubted.

These circumstances make the morality of the book the more remarkable. To teach political science denuded of commonplace hypocrisies was a worthy object. But while seeking to lay bare the springs of action, and to separate statecraft from morals, Machiavelli found himself impelled to recognise a system of inverted ethics. The abrupt division of the two realms, ethical and political, which he attempted, was monstrous; and he ended by substituting inhumanity for human nature. Unable to escape the logic which links morality of some sort with conduct, he gave his adhesion to the false code of contemporary practice. He believed that the right way to attain a result so splendid as the liberation of Italy was to proceed by force, craft, bad faith, and all the petty arts of a political adventurer. The public ethics of his day had sunk to this low level. Success by means of plain dealing was impossible. The game of statecraft could only be carried on by guile and violence. Even the clear genius of Machiavelli had been obscured by the muddy medium of intrigue in which he had been working all his life. Even his keen insight was dazzled by the false splendour of the adventurer Cesare Borgia.

To have formulated the ethics of the 'Principe' is not diabolical. There is no inventive superfluity of naughtiness in the treatise. It is simply a handbook of princecraft, as that art was commonly received in Italy, where the principles of public morality had been translated into terms of material aggrandisement, glory, gain, and greatness. No one thought of judging men by their motives but by their practice; they were not regarded as moral but as political beings, responsible, that is to say, to no law but the obligation of success. Crimes which we regard as horrible were then commended as magnanimous, if it could be shown that they were prompted by a firm will and had for their object

<sup>75</sup> The two long letters to Fr. Vettori (Aug. 26, 1513) and to Piero Soderini (no date) should be studied side by side with the *Principe* for the light they throw on Machiavelli's opinions there expressed.

a deliberate end. Machiavelli and Paolo Giovio, for example, both praise the massacre at Sinigaglia as a masterstroke of art, without uttering a word in condemnation of its perfidy. Machiavelli sneers at Gianpaolo Baglioni because he had not the courage to strangle his guest Julius II. and to crown his other crimes with this signal act of magnanimity. What virtue had come to mean in the Italian language we have seen already. The one quality which every one despised was simplicity, however this might be combined with lofty genius and noble aims. It was because Soderini was simple and had a good heart that Machiavelli wrote the famous epigram—

La notte che morì Pier Soderini,  
L' alma n' andò dell' inferno alla bocca;  
E Pluto le gridò: Anima sciocca,  
Che inferno? va nel limbo de' bambini.

The night that Peter Soderini died,  
His soul flew down unto the mouth of hell:  
'What? Hell for you? You silly spirit! cried  
The fiend: 'your place is where the babies dwell.'

As of old in Corcyra, so now in Italy, 'guilelessness, which is the principal ingredient of genuine nobleness, was laughed down, and disappeared.'<sup>76</sup> What men feared was not the moral verdict of society, pronouncing them degraded by vicious or violent acts, but the intellectual estimate of incapacity and the stigma of dulness. They were afraid of being reckoned among feebler personalities; and to escape from this contempt, by the commission even of atrocities, had come to be accounted manly. The truth, missed almost universally, was that the supreme wisdom, the paramount virility, is law-abiding honesty, the doing of right because right is right, in scorn of consequence. Nothing appears more clearly in the memoirs of Cellini than this point, while the Italian novels are full of matter bearing on the same topic. It is therefore ridiculous to assume that an Italian judged of men or conduct in any sense according to our standards. Pinturicchio and Perugino thought it no shame to work for princes like the Baglioni and for Popes like Alexander VI. Lionardo da Vinci placed his talents as an engineer at the service of Cesare Borgia, and employed his genius as a musician and a painter for the amusement of the Milanese Court, which must have been, according to Corio's account, flagrantly and shamelessly corrupt. Leo Battista Alberti, one of the most charming and the most gentle spirits of the earlier Renaissance, in like manner lent his architectural ability to the vanity of the iniquitous Sigismondo Malatesta. No: the 'Principe' was not inconsistent with the general tone of the Italian morality; and Machiavelli cannot be fairly taxed with the discovery of a new infernal method. The conception of politics as a bare

<sup>76</sup> Thuc. iii. 83. The whole of the passage about Corcyra in the third book of Thucydides (chs. 82 and 83) applies literally to the moral condition of Italy at this period.

art of means to ends had grown up in his mind by the study of Italian history and social customs. His idealisation of Cesare Borgia and his romance of 'Castruccio' were the first products of the theory he had formed by observation of the world he lived in. The 'Principe' revealed it fully organised. But to have presented such an essay in good faith to the Despots of his own native city, at that particular moment in his own career, an under the pressure of trivial distress, is a real blot upon his memory.

We learn from Varchi that Machiavelli was execrated in Florence for his 'Principe,' the poor thinking it would teach the Medici to take away their honour, the rich regarding it as an attack upon their wealth, and both discerning in it a death-blow to freedom.<sup>77</sup> Machiavelli can scarcely have calculated upon this evil opinion, which followed him to the grave: for though he showed some hesitation in his letter to Vettori about the propriety of presenting the essay to the Medici, this was only grounded on the fear lest a rival should get the credit for his labours. Again, he uttered no syllable about its being intended for a trap to catch the Medici, and commit them to unpardonable crimes. We may therefore conclude that this explanation of the purpose of the 'Principe' (which, strange to say, has approved itself to even recent critics) was promulgated either by himself or by his friends, as an afterthought, when he saw that the work had missed its mark, and at the same time when he was trying to suppress the MS.<sup>78</sup> Bernardo Giunti in the dedication of the edition of 1532, and Reginald Pole in 1535 were, I believe, the first to put forth this fanciful theory in print. Machiavelli could not before 1520 have boasted of the patriotic treachery with which he was afterwards accredited, so far, at any rate, as to lose the confidence of the Medicean family; for in that year the Cardinal Giulio de' Medici commissioned him to write the history of Florence.

The 'Principe,' after its dedication to Lorenzo, remained in MS., and Machiavelli was not employed, in spite of the continual solicitations of his friend Vettori.<sup>79</sup> Nothing remained for him but to seek other patrons, and to employ his leisure in new literary work. Between 1516 and 1519, therefore, we find him taking part in the literary and philosophical discussions of the Florentine Academy, which assembled at that period in the Rucellai Gardens.<sup>80</sup> It was here that he read his

<sup>77</sup> *Storia Fior.* lib. iv. cap. 15.

<sup>78</sup> See Varchi, loc. cit. The letter written by Machiavelli to Fr. Guicciardini from Carpi, May 17. 1521, should be studied in this connection. It is unfortunately too mutilated to be wholly intelligible. After explaining his desire to be of use to Florence, but not after the manner most approved of by the Florentines themselves, he says: 'Io credo che questo sarebbe il vero modo di andare in Paradiso, imparare la via dell' Inferno per fuggirla.'

<sup>79</sup> The political letters addressed to Francesco Vettori, at Rome, and intended probably for the eye of Leo X., were written in 1514. The discourse addressed to Leo, *sulla riforma dello stato di Firenze*, may be referred perhaps to 1519.

<sup>80</sup> Of these meetings Filippo de' Nerli writes in the Seventh Book of his *Commentaries*, p. 138: 'Avendo convenuto assai tempo nell' orto de' Rucellai una certa scuola di giovani letterati e d' elevato ingegno, infra quali praticava continuamente Niccolò

'Discourses on the First Decade of Livy'—a series of profound essays upon the administration of the State, to which the sentences of the Roman historian serve as texts. Having set forth in the 'Principe' the method of gaining or maintaining sovereign power, he shows in the 'Discorsi' what institutions are necessary to preserve the body politic in a condition of vigorous activity. We may therefore regard the 'Discorsi' as in some sense a continuation of the 'Principe.' But the wisdom of the scientific politician is no longer placed at the disposal of a sovereign. He addresses himself to all the members of a State who are concerned in its prosperity. Machiavelli's enemies have therefore been able to insinuate that, after teaching tyranny in one pamphlet, he expounded the principles of opposition to a tyrant in the other, shifting his sails as the wind veered.<sup>81</sup> The truth here also lies in the critical and scientific quality of Machiavelli's method. He was content to lecture either to princes or to burghers upon politics, as an art which he had taken great pains to study, while his interest in the demonstration of principles rendered him in a measure indifferent to their application.<sup>82</sup> In fact, to use the pithy words of Macaulay, 'the "Prince" traces the progress of an ambitious man, the "Discourses" the progress of an ambitious people. The same principles on which, in the former work, the elevation of an individual is explained, are applied in the latter to the longer duration and more complex interest of a society.'

The Seven Books on the Art of War may be referred with certainty to the same period of Machiavelli's life. They were probably composed in 1520. If we may venture to connect the works of the historian's leisure, according to the plan above suggested, this treatise forms a supplement to the 'Principe' and the 'Discorsi.' Both in his analysis of the successful tyrant and in his description of the powerful commonwealth he had insisted on the prime necessity of warfare, conducted by the people and their rulers in person. The military organisation of a great kingdom is here developed in a separate essay, and Machiavelli's favourite scheme for nationalising the militia of Italy is systematically expounded. Giovio's flippant objection, that the philosopher could not in practice manœuvre a single company, is no real criticism on the merit of his theory.

By this time the Medici had determined to take Machiavelli into favour; and since he had expressed a wish to be set at least to rolling stones, they found for him a trivial piece of work. The Franciscans at Carpi had to be requested to organise a separate Province of their Order in the Florentine dominion; and the conduct of this weighty matter

Machiavelli (ed io ero di Niccolò e di tutti loro amicissimo, e molto spesso con loro conversavo), s' esercitavano costoro assai, mediante le lettere, nelle lezioni dell' istorie, e sopra di esse, ed a loro estanza compose il Machiavello quel suo libro de' discorsi sopra Tito Livio, e anco il libro di que' trattati e ragionamenti sopra la milizia.'

<sup>81</sup> See Pitti, 'Apologia de' Cappucci,' *Arch. Stor.* vol. iv. pt. ii. p. 294.

<sup>82</sup> The dedication of the *Discorsi* contains a phrase which recalls Machiavelli's words about the *Principe*: 'Perche in quello io ho espresso quanto io so, e quanto io ho imparato per una lunga practica e continua lezione delle cose del mondo.'

was entrusted to the former secretary at the Courts of Maximilian and Louis. Several other missions during the last years of his life devolved upon Machiavelli; but none of them was of much importance: nor, when the popular government was instituted in 1527, had he so far regained the confidence of the Florentines as to resume his old office of war secretary. This post, considering his recent alliance with the Medicean party, he could hardly have expected to receive; and therefore it is improbable that the news of Giannotti's election at all contributed to cause his death.<sup>83</sup> Disappointment he may indeed have felt: for his moral force had been squandered during fifteen years in the attempt to gain the favour of princes who were now once more regarded as the enemies of their country. When the republic was at last restored, he found himself in neither camp. The overtures which he had made to the Medici had been but coldly received; yet they were sufficiently notorious to bring upon him the suspicion of the patriots. He had not sincerely acted up to the precept of Polonius: 'This above all, —to thine own self be true.' His intellectual ability, untampered by sufficient political consistency or moral elevation, had placed him among the outcasts:—

che non furon ribelli,  
Nè fur fedeli a Dio, ma per sè foro.

The great achievement of these years was the composition of the 'Istorie Fiorentine.' The commission for this work he received from Giulio de' Medici through the Officiali dello Studio in 1520, with an annual allowance of 100 florins. In 1527, the year of his death, he dedicated the finished History to Pope Clement VII. This masterpiece of literary art, though it may be open to the charges of inaccuracy and superficiality,<sup>84</sup> marks an epoch in the development of modern historiography. It must be remembered that it preceded the great work of Guicciardini by some years, and that before the date of its appearance the annalists of Italy had been content with records of events, personal impressions, and critiques of particular periods. Machiavelli was the first to contemplate the life of a nation in its continuity, to trace the operation of political forces through successive generations, to contrast the action of individuals with the evolution of causes over which they had but little control, and to bring the salient features of the national biography into relief by the suppression of comparatively unimportant details. By thus applying the philosophical method to history, Machiavelli enriched the science of humanity with a new department. There is something in his view of national existence beyond the reach of even the profoundest of the classical historians. His style is adequate to the matter of his work. Never were clear and definite thoughts expressed

<sup>83</sup> See Varchi, loc. cit.

<sup>84</sup> See the criticisms of Ammirato and Romagnosi, quoted by Cantù, *Letteratura Italiana*, p. 187.

with greater precision in language of more masculine vigour. We are irresistibly compelled, while characterising this style, to think of the spare sinews of a trained gladiator. Though Machiavelli was a poet, he indulges in no ornaments of rhetoric.<sup>85</sup> His images, rare and carefully chosen, seem necessary to the thoughts they illustrate. Though a philosopher, he never wanders into speculation. Facts and experience are so thoroughly compacted with reflection in his mind, that his wildest generalisations have the substance of realities. The element of unreality, if such there be, is due to a misconception of human nature: Machiavelli seems to have only studied men in masses, or as political instruments, never as feeling and thinking personalities.

Machiavelli, according to the letter addressed by his son Pietro to Francesco Nelli, died of a dose of medicine taken at the wrong time. He was attended on his deathbed by a friar, who received his confession. His private morality was but indifferent. His contempt for weakness and simplicity was undisguised. His knowledge of the world and men had turned to cynicism. The frigid philosophy expressed in his political Essays, and the sarcastic speeches in which he gave a vent to his soured humours, made him unpopular. It was supposed that he had died with blasphemy upon his lips, after turning all the sanctities of human nature into ridicule. Through these myths, as through a mist, we may discern the bitterness of that great disenchanted, disappointed soul. The desert in which spirits of the stamp of Machiavelli wander is too arid and too aerial for the gross substantial bugbears of the vulgar conscience to inhabit. Moreover, as Varchi says, 'In his conversation Machiavelli was pleasant, serviceable to his friends, a friend of virtuous men, and, in a word, worthy of having received from nature either less genius or a better mind.'

<sup>85</sup> I shall have to speak elsewhere of Machiavelli's comedies, occasional poems, novel of *Belphegor*, &c.

## CHAPTER VI

### 'THE PRINCE' OF MACHIAVELLI

*The Sincerity of Machiavelli in this Essay—Machiavellism—His deliberate Formulation of a cynical Political Theory—Analysis of the 'Prince'—Nine Conditions of Principalities—The Interest of the Conqueror acknowledged as the sole Motive of his Policy—Critique of Louis XII.—Feudal Monarchy and Oriental Despotism—Three Ways of subduing a free City—Example of Pisa—Principalities founded by Adventurers—Moses, Romulus, Cyrus, Theseus—Savonarola—Francesco Sforza—Cesare Borgia—Machiavelli's Personal Relation to him—Machiavelli's Admiration of Cesare's Genius—A Sketch of Cesare's Career—Concerning those who have attained to Sovereignty by Crimes—Oliverotto da Fermo—The Uses of Cruelty—Messer Ramiro d'Orco—The pessimistic Morality of Machiavelli—On the Faith of Princes—Alexander VI.—The Policy of seeming Virtuous and Honest—Absence of Chivalrous Feeling in Italy—The Military System of a powerful Prince—Criticism of Mercenaries and Auxiliaries—Necessity of National Militia—The Art of War—Patriotic Conclusion of the Treatise—Machiavelli and Savonarola.*

AFTER what has been already said about the circumstances under which Machiavelli composed the 'Principe,' we are justified in regarding it as a sincere expression of his political philosophy. The intellect of its author was eminently analytical and positive; he knew well how to confine himself within the strictest limits of the subject he had chosen. In the 'Principe' it was not his purpose to write a treatise of morality, but to set forth with scientific accuracy the arts which he considered necessary to the success of an absolute ruler. We may therefore accept this essay as the most profound and lucid exposition of the principles by which Italian statesmen were guided in the sixteenth century. That Machiavellism existed before Machiavelli has now become a truism. Gian Galeazzo Visconti, Louis XI. of France, Ferdinand the Catholic, the Papal Curia, and the Venetian Council had systematically pursued the policy laid down in the chapters of the 'Prince.' But it is no less true that Machiavelli was the first in modern times to formulate a theory of government in which the interests of the ruler are alone regarded, which assumes a separation between statecraft and morality, which recognises force and fraud among the legitimate means of attaining high political ends, which makes success alone the test of conduct, and which presupposes the corruption, venality, and baseness of mankind at large. It was this which aroused the animosity of Europe against Machiavelli, as soon as the 'Prince' attained wide circulation. Nations accustomed to the Monarchical rather than the Despotic form of government resented the systematic exposition of an art of tyranny which had long been



practised among the Italians. The people of the North, whose moral fibre was still vigorous, and who retained their respect for established religion, could not tolerate the cynicism with which Machiavelli analysed his subject from the merely intellectual point of view. His name became a byword. 'Am I Machiavel?' says the Host in the 'Merry Wives of Windsor.' Marlowe makes the ghost of the great Florentine speak prologue to the 'Jew of Malta' thus—

I count religion but a childish toy,  
And hold there is no sir but ignorance.

When the Counter-Reformation had begun in Italy, and desperate efforts were being made to check the speculative freedom of the Renaissance, the 'Principe' was condemned by the Inquisition. Meanwhile it was whispered that the Spanish princes, and the sons of Catherine de' Medici upon the throne of France, conned its pages just as a manual of toxicology might be studied by a Marquise de Brinvilliers. Machiavelli became the scapegoat of great political crimes; and during the religious wars of the sixteenth century there were not wanting fanatics who ascribed such acts of atrocity as the Massacre of S. Bartholomew to his venomous influence. Yet this book was really nothing more or less than a critical compendium of facts respecting Italy, a highly condensed abstract of political experience. In it as in a mirror we may study the lineaments of the Italian Despot who by adventure or by heritage succeeded to the conduct of a kingdom. At the same time the political principles here established are those which guided the deliberations of the Venetian Council and the Papal Court, no less than the actions of a Sforza or a Borgia upon the path to power. It is therefore a document of the very highest value for the illustration of the Italian conscience in relation to political morality.

The 'Principe' opens with the statement that all forms of government may be classified as republics or as principalities. Of the latter some are hereditary, others acquired. Of the principalities acquired in the lifetime of the ruler some are wholly new, like Milan under Francesco Sforza; others are added to hereditary kingdoms, like Naples to Spain. Again, such acquired states have been previously accustomed either to the rule of a single man or to self-government. Finally they are won either with the conqueror's own or with borrowed armies, either by fortune or by ability.<sup>1</sup> Thus nine conditions under which principalities may be considered are established at the outset.

The short chapter devoted by Machiavelli to hereditary principalities may be passed over as comparatively unimportant. It is characteristic of Italian politics that the only instance he adduces of this form of

<sup>1</sup> The word *Virtù*, which I have translated ability, is almost equivalent to the Greek *ἀρετή* before it had received a moral definition, or to the Roman *Virtus*. It is very far, as will be gathered from the sequel of the *Principe*, from denoting what we mean by Virtue.

government in Italy is the Duchy of Ferrara. States and cities were so frequently shifting owners in the sixteenth century that the scientific politician was justified in confining his attention to the method of establishing and preserving principalities acquired by force. When he passes to the consideration of this class, Machiavelli enters upon the real subject of his essay. The first instance he discusses is that of a prince who has conquered a dominion which he wishes to unite as firmly as possible to his hereditary states. The new territory may either belong to the same nationality and language as the old possession, or may not. In the former case it will be enough to extinguish the whole line of the ancient rulers, and to take care that neither the laws nor the imposts of the province be materially altered. It will then in course of time become by natural coalition part of the old kingdom. But if the acquired dominion be separate in language, customs, and traditions from the old, then arises a real difficulty for the conqueror. In order to consolidate his empire and to accustom his new subjects to his rule, Machiavelli recommends that he should either take up his residence in the subjugated province, or else plant colonies throughout it, but that he should by no means trust merely to garrisons. 'Colonies,' he remarks, 'are not costly to the prince, are more faithful, and cause less offense to the subject states; those whom they may injure, being poor and scattered, are prevented from doing mischief. For it should be observed that men ought either to be caressed or trampled out, seeing that small injuries may be avenged, whereas great ones destroy the possibility of retaliation; and so the damage that has to be inflicted ought to be such that it need involve no fear of vengeance.' I quote this passage as a specimen of Machiavelli's direct and scientific handling of the most inhuman necessities of statecraft, as conceived by him.<sup>2</sup> He uses no hypocritical palliation to disguise the egotism of the conqueror. He does not even pretend to take into consideration any interests but those of the ambitious prince. He treats humanity as though it were the marble out of which the political artist should hew the form that pleased his fancy best. He calculates the exact amount of oppression which will render a nation incapable of resistance, and relieve the conqueror of trouble in his work of building up a puissant kingdom for his own aggrandisement.

What Machiavelli says about mixed principalities is pointed by a searching critique of the Italian policy of Louis XII. The French king had well-known claims upon the Duchy of Milan, which the Venetians urged him to make good. They proposed to unite forces and to divide the conquered province of Lombardy. Machiavelli does not blame Louis for accepting this offer and acting in concert with the Republic. His mistakes began the moment after he had gained possession of Milan,

<sup>2</sup> It is fair to call attention to the strong expressions used by Machiavelli in the *Discorsi*, lib. i. cap. 18 and cap. 26, on the infamies and inhumanities to which the aspirant after tyranny is condemned.

Genoa, and the majority of the North Italian cities. It was then his true policy to balance Venice against Rome, to assume the protectorate of the minor states, and to keep all dangerous rivals out of Italy. Instead of acting thus, he put Romagna into the hands of the Pope and divided Naples with the King of Spain. 'Louis indeed,' concludes Machiavelli, 'was guilty of five capital errors: he destroyed the hopes of his numerous and weak allies; he increased the power, already too great, of the Papacy; he introduced a foreign potentate; he neglected to reside in Italy; he founded no colonies for the maintenance of his authority. . If I am told that Louis acted thus imprudently toward Alexander and Ferdinand in order to avoid a war, I answer that in each case the mistake was as bad as any wars could be in its results. If I am reminded of his promise to the Pope, I reply that princes ought to know how and when to break their faith, as I intend to prove. When I was at Nantes, the Cardinal of Rouen told me that the Italians did not know how to conduct a war: I retorted that the French did not understand statecraft, or they would not have allowed the Church to gain so much power in Italy. Experience showed that I was right; for the French wrought their own ruin by aggrandising the Papacy and introducing Spain into the realm of Naples.'

This criticism contains the very essence of political sagacity. It lays bare the secret of the failure of the French under Charles, under Louis, and under Francis, to establish themselves in Italy. Expeditions of parade, however brilliant, temporary conquests, cross alliances, and bloody victories do not consolidate a kingdom. They upset states and cause misery to nations; but their effects pass and leave the so-called conquerors worse off than they were before. It was the doom of Italy to be ravaged by these inconsequent marauders, who never attempted by internal organisation to found a substantial empire, until the mortmain of the Spanish rule was laid upon the peninsula, and Austria gained by marriages what France had failed to win by force of arms.

The fourth chapter of the 'Principe' is devoted to a parallel between Monarchies and Despotisms which is chiefly interesting as showing that Machiavelli appreciates the stability of kingdoms based upon feudal foundations. France is chosen as the best example of the one and Turkey of the other. 'The whole empire of the Turk is governed by one Lord; the others are his servants; he divides his kingdom into satrapies, to which he appoints different administrators, whom he changes about at pleasure. But the King of France is placed in the centre of a time-honoured company of lords, acknowledged as such by their subjects and loved by them; they have their own prerogatives, nor can the king deprive them of these without peril.' Hence it follows that the prince who has once dispossessed a Despot finds ready to his hand a machinery of government and a band of subservient ministers; while he who may dethrone a monarch has immediately to cope with a multitude of independent rulers, too numerous to extinguish and too proud to conciliate.

Machiavelli now proceeds to discuss the best method of subjugating

free cities which have been acquired by a prince. There are three ways of doing it, he says. 'The first is to destroy them utterly; the second, to rule them in your own person; the third, to leave them their constitution under the conduct of an oligarchy chosen by yourself, and to be content with tribute. But, to speak the truth, the only safe way is to ruin them.' This sounds very much like the advice which an old spider might give to a young one: When you have caught a big fly, suck him at once; suck out at any rate so much of his blood as may make him powerless to break your web, and feed on him afterwards at leisure. Then he goes on to give his reasons. 'He who becomes the master of a city used to liberty, and does not destroy it, should be prepared to be undone by it himself, because that name of Liberty, those ancient usages of Freedom, which no length of years and no benefits can extinguish in the nation's mind, which cannot be uprooted by any forethought or by any pains, unless the citizens themselves be broken or dispersed, will always be a rallying-point for revolution when an opportunity occurs.' This terrific moral—through which, let it be said in justice to Machiavelli, the enthusiasm of a patriot transpires—is pointed by the example of Pisa. Pisa, held for a century beneath the heel of Florence—her ports shut up, her fields abandoned to marsh fever, her civic life extinguished, her arts and sciences crushed out—had yet not been utterly ruined in the true sense of depopulation or dismemberment. Therefore when Charles VIII. in 1494 entered Pisa, and Orlandi, the orator, caught him by the royal mantle, and besought him to restore her liberty, that word, the only word the crowd could catch in his petition, inflamed a nation: the lions and lilies of Florence were erased from the public buildings; the Marzocco was dashed from its column on the quay into the Arno; and in a moment the dead republic awoke to life. Therefore, argues Machiavelli, so tenacious is the vitality of a free state that a prudent conqueror will extinguish it entirely or will rule it in person with a rod of iron. This, be it remembered, is the advice of Machiavelli, the Florentine patriot, to Lorenzo de' Medici, the Florentine tyrant, who has recently resumed his seat upon the neck of that irrepressible republic.

Hitherto we have been considering how the state acquired by a conqueror should be incorporated with his previous dominions. The next section of Machiavelli's discourse is by far the most interesting. It treats of principalities created by the arms, personal qualities, and good fortune of adventurers. Italy alone in the sixteenth century furnished examples of these tyrannies: consequently that portion of the 'Principe' which is concerned with them has a special interest for students of the Renaissance. Machiavelli begins with the founders of kingdoms who have owed but little to fortune and have depended on their own forces. The list he furnishes, when tested by modern notions of history, is to say the least a curious one. It contains Moses, Cyrus, Romulus, and Theseus. Having mentioned Moses first, Machiavelli proceeds to explain that, though we have to regard him as the mere instrument of God's purpose, yet the principles on which the other

founders acted were 'not different from those which Moses derived from so supreme a teacher.' What these men severally owed to fortune was but the occasion for the display of the greatness that was in them. Moses found the people of Israel enslaved in Egypt. Romulus was an exile from Alba. Cyrus had to deal with the Persian people tired of the empire of effeminate Medes. Theseus undertook to unite the scattered elements of the Athenian nation. Thus each of these founders had an opening provided for him, by making use of which he was able to bring his illustrious qualities into play. The achievement in each case was afterwards due solely to his own ability, and the conquest which he made with difficulty was preserved with ease. This exordium is not without practical importance, as will be seen when we reach the application of the whole argument to the house of Medici at the conclusion of the treatise. The initial obstacles which an innovator has to overcome, meanwhile, are enormous. 'He has for passionate foes all such as flourish under the old order, for friends those who might flourish under the new; but these are lukewarm, partly from fear of their opponents, on whose side are established law and right, partly from the incredulity which prevents men from putting faith in what is novel and untried.' It therefore becomes a matter of necessity that the innovator should be backed up with force, that he should be in a position to command and not obliged to sue for aid. This is the reason why all the prophets who have used arms to enforce their revelations have succeeded, and why those who have only trusted to their personal ascendancy have failed. Moses, of course, is 'an illustrious example of the successful prophet. Savonarola is adduced as a notable instance of a reformer 'who was ruined in his work of innovation as soon as the multitude lost their faith in him, since he had no means of keeping those who had believed firm, or of compelling faith from disbelievers.' In this critique Machiavelli remains true to his positive and scientific philosophy of human nature. He will not allow that there are other permanent agencies in the world than the calculating ability of resolute men and the might derived from physical forces.

Among the eminent examples of Italian founders who rose to princely power by their own ability or by availing themselves of the advantages which fortune put within their reach. Machiavelli selects Francesco Sforza and Cesare Borgia. The former is a notable instance of success achieved by pure *virtù*: 'Francesco, by using the right means, and by his own singular ability, raised himself from the rank of a private man to the Duchy of Milan, and maintained with ease the mastery he had acquired with infinite pains.' Cesare, on the other hand, illustrates both the strength and the weakness of *fortuna*: 'he acquired his dominion, by the aid derived from his father's position and when he lost that he also lost his power, notwithstanding that he used every endeavour and did all that a prudent and able man ought to do in order to plant himself firmly in those states which the arms and fortune of others had placed at his disposal.' It is not necessary

to dwell upon the career of Francesco Sforza. Not he but Cesare Borgia is Machiavelli's hero in this treatise, the example from which he deduces lessons both of imitation and avoidance for the benefit of Lorenzo de' Medici. Lorenzo, it must be remembered, like Cesare, would have the fortunes of the Church to start with in that career of ambition to which Machiavelli incites him. Unlike Francesco Sforza, he was no mere soldier of adventure, but a prince, born in the purple, and bound to make use of these undefined advantages which he derived from his position in Florence and from the countenance of his uncle, the Pope. The Duke Valentino, therefore, who is at one and the same time Machiavelli's ideal of prudence and courage in the conduct of affairs, and also his chief instance of the instability of fortune, supplies the philosopher with all he needed for the guidance of his princely pupil. With the Duke Valentino Machiavelli had conversed on terms of private intimacy, and there is no doubt that his imagination had been dazzled by the brilliant intellectual abilities of this consummate rogue. Despatched in 1502 by the Florentine Republic to watch the operations of Cesare at Imola, with secret instructions to offer the Duke false promises in the hope of eliciting information that could be relied upon, Machiavelli had enjoyed the rare pleasure of a game at political écarté with the subtlest and most unscrupulous diplomatist of his age. He had witnessed his terrible yet beneficial administration of Romagna. He had been present at his murder of the chiefs of the Orsini faction at Sinigaglia. Cesare had confided to him, or had pretended to confide, his schemes of personal ambition, as well as the motives and the measures of his secret policy. On the day of the election of Pope Julius II. he had laid bare the whole of his past history before the Florentine secretary, and had pointed out the single weakness of which he felt himself to have been guilty. In these trials of skill and this exchange of confidence it is impossible to say which of the two gamesters may have been the more deceived. But Machiavelli felt that the Borgia supplied him with a perfect specimen for the study of the arts of statecraft: and so deep was the impression produced upon his mind, that even after the utter failure of Cesare's designs he made him the hero of the political romance before us. His artistic perception of the perfect and the beautiful, both in unscrupulous conduct and in frigid calculation of conflicting interests, was satisfied by the steady selfishness, the persistent perfidy, the profound mistrust of men, the self-command in the execution of perilous designs, the moderate and deliberate employment of cruelty for definite ends, which he observed in the young Duke, and which he has idealised in his own 'Prince.' That nature, as of a salamander adapted to its element of fire, as of 'a resolute angel that delights in flame,' to which nothing was sacred, which nothing could daunt, which never for a moment sacrificed reason to passion, which was incapable of weakness or fatigue, had fascinated Machiavelli's fancy. The moral qualities of the man, the base foundations upon which he raised his power, the unutterable scandals of his private life, and the



hatred of all Christendom were as nothing in the balance. Such considerations had, according to the conditions of his subject, to be eliminated before he weighed the intellectual qualities of the adventurer. 'If all the achievements of the Duke are considered'—it is Machiavelli speaking—'it will be found that he built up a great substructure for his future power; nor do I know what precepts I could furnish to a prince in his commencement better than such as are to be derived from his example.' It is thus that Machiavelli, the citizen, addresses Lorenzo, the tyrant of Florence. He says to him: Go thou and do likewise. And what, then, is this likewise?

Cesare, being a Pope's son, had nothing to look to but the influence of his father. At first he designed to use this influence in the Church; but after murdering his elder brother, he threw aside the Cardinal's scarlet and proclaimed himself a political aspirant. His father could not make him the lord of any state, unless it were a portion of the territory of the Church: and though, by creating, as he did, twelve Cardinals in one day, he got the Sacred College to sanction his investiture of the Duchy of Romagna, yet both Venice and Milan were opposed to this scheme. Again there was a difficulty to be encountered in the great baronial houses of Orsini and Colonna, who at that time headed all the mercenary troops of Italy, and who, as Roman nobles, had a natural hatred for the Pope. It was necessary to use their aid in the acquisition of Cesare's principality. It was no less needful to humour their animosity. Under these circumstances Alexander thought it best to invite the French king into Italy, bargaining with Louis that he would dissolve his marriage in return for protection awarded to Cesare. The Colonna faction meanwhile was to be crushed and the Orsini to be flattered. Cesare, by the help of his French allies and the Orsini captains, took possession of Imola and Faenza, and thence proceeded to overrun Romagna. In this enterprise he succeeded to the full. Romagna had been, from the earliest period of Italian history, a nest of petty tyrants who governed badly and who kept no peace in their dominions. Therefore the towns were but languid in their opposition to Cesare, and were soon more than contented with a conqueror who introduced a good system for the administration of justice. But now two difficulties arose. The subjugation of Romagna had been affected by the help of the French and the Orsini. Cesare as yet had formed no militia of his own, and his allies were becoming suspicious. The Orsini had shown some slackness at Faenza; and when Cesare proceeded to make himself master of Urbino, and to place a foot in Tuscany by the capture of Piombino—which conquests he completed during 1500 and 1501—Louis began to be jealous of him. The problem for the Duke was how to disembarass himself of the two forces by which he had acquired a solid basis for his future principality. His first move was to buy over the Cardinal d'Amboise, whose influence in the French Court was supreme, and thus to keep his credit for awhile afloat with Louis. His second was to neutralise the power of the Orsini, partly by pitting them against



the Colonnesi, and partly by superseding them in their command as captains. For the latter purpose he became his own Condottiere, drawing to his standard by the lure of splendid pay all the minor gentry of the Roman Campagna. Thus he collected his own forces and was able to dispense with the unsafe aid of mercenary troops. At this point of his career the Orsini, finding him established in Romagna, in Urbino, and in part of Tuscany, while their own strength was on the decline, determined if possible to check the career of this formidable tyrant by assassination. The conspiracy known as the 'Diet of La Magione' was the consequence. In this conjuration the Cardinal Orsini, Paolo Orsini, his brother and head of the great house, together with Vitellozzo Vitelli, lord of Città di Castello, the Baglione of Perugia, the Bentivoglio of Bologna, Antonio da Venasso from Siena, and Oliverotto da Fermo took each a part. The result of their machinations against the common foe was that Cesare for a moment lost Urbino, and was nearly unseated in Romagna. But the French helped him, and he stood firm. Still it was impossible to believe that Louis XII. would suffer him to advance unchecked in his career of conquest; and as long as he continued between the French and the Orsini his position was of necessity insecure. The former had to be cast off; the latter to be extirpated: and as yet he had not force enough to play an open game. 'He therefore,' says Machiavelli, 'turned to craft, and displayed such skill in dissimulation that the Orsini through the mediation of Paolo became his friends again.' The cruelty of Cesare Borgia was only equalled by his craft; and it was by a supreme exercise of his power of fascination that he lured the foes who had plotted against him at La Magione into his snare at Sinigaglia. Paolo Orsini, Francesco Orsini, duke of Gravina, Vitellozzo Vitelli, and Oliverotto da Fermo were all men of arms, accustomed to intrigue and to bloodshed, and more than one of them were stained with crimes of the most atrocious treachery. Yet such were the arts of Cesare Borgia that in 1502 he managed to assemble them, apart from their troops, in the castle of Sinigaglia, where he had them strangled. Having now destroyed the chiefs of the opposition and enlisted their forces in his own service, Cesare, to use the phrase of Machiavelli, 'had laid good foundations for his future power.' He commanded a sufficient territory; he wielded the temporal and spiritual power of his father; he was feared by the princes and respected by the people throughout Italy; his cruelty and perfidy and subtlety and boldness caused him to be universally admired. But as yet he had only laid foundations. The empire of Italy was still to win; for he aspired to nothing else, and it is even probable that he entertained a notion of secularising the Papacy. France was the chief obstacle to his ambition. The alarm of Louis had at last been roused. But Louis' own mistake in bringing the Spaniards into Naples afforded Cesare the means of shaking off the French control. He espoused the cause of Spain, and by intriguing now with the one power and now with the other made himself both formidable and desirable to each. His geographical position between Milan and Naples

enforced this policy. Another difficulty against which he had to provide was in the future rather than the present. Should his father die, and a new Pope adverse to his interests be elected, he might lose not only the support of the Holy See, but also his fiefs of Romagna and Urbino. To meet this contingency he took four precautions, mentioned with great admiration by Machiavelli. In the first place he systematically murdered the heirs of the ruling families of all the cities he had acquired—as for example three Varani at Camerino, two Manfredi at Faenza, the Orsini and Vitelli at Sinigaglia, and others whom it would be tedious to mention. By this process he left no scion of the ancient houses for a future Pope to restore. In the second place he attached to his person, by pensions, offices, and emoluments, all the Roman gentry, so that he might be able to keep the new Pope a prisoner and unarmed in Rome. Thirdly, he reduced the College of Cardinals, by bribery, terrorism, poisoning, and packed elections, to such a state that he could count on the creation of a Pope, if not his nominee, at least not hostile to his interests. Fourthly, he lost no time, but pushed his plans of conquest on with the utmost speed, so as, if possible, to command a large territory at the time of Alexander's death. Machiavelli, who records these four points with approbation, adds: 'He, therefore, who finds it needful in his new authority to secure himself against foes, to acquire allies, to gain a point by force or fraud, &c., &c., could not discover an ensample more vigorous and blooming than that of Cesare.' Such is the panegyric which Machiavelli, writing, as it seems to me, in all good faith and innocence, records of a man who, taken altogether, is perhaps the most selfish, perfidious, and murderous of adventurers on record. The only fault for which he blames him is that he did not prevent the election of Pope Julius II. by concentrating his influence on either the Cardinal d'Amboise or a Spaniard.

It is curious to read the title of the chapter following that which criticises the action of Cesare Borgia: it runs thus, 'Concerning those who have attained to sovereignty by crimes.' Cesare was clearly not one of these men in the eyes of Machiavelli, who confines his attention to Agathocles of Syracuse, and to Oliverotto da Fermo, a brigand who acquired the lordship of Fermo, by murdering his uncle and benefactor, Giovanni Fogliani, and all the chief men of the city at a banquet to which he had invited them. This atrocity, according to Machiavelli's creed, would have been justified, if Oliverotto had combined cruelty and subtlety in proper proportions. But his savagery was not sufficiently veiled; a prince should never incur odium by crimes of violence, but only use them as the means of inspiring terror. Besides, Oliverotto was so simple as to fall at last into the snare of Cesare Borgia at Sinigaglia. Cesare himself supplies Machiavelli with a notable example of the way in which cruelty can be well used. Having found the cities of Romagna in great disorder, Cesare determined to quell them by the ferocity of a terrible governor. For this purpose he chose Messer Ramiro d'Orco, 'a man cruel and quick of action, to whom he gave the fullest power.'

A story is told of Messer Ramiro which illustrates his temper in a very bizarre fashion: he one day kicked a clumsy page on to the fire, and held him there with a poker till he was burned up. Acting after this fashion, with plenipotentiary authority, Ramiro soon froze the whole province into comparative tranquillity. But it did not suit Cesare to incur the odium which the man's cruelty brought on his administration. Accordingly he had him decapitated one night and exposed to public view, together with the block and bloody hatchet, in the square at Cesena. Of the art with which Cesare first reduced Romagna to order by the cruelty of his agent, and then avoided the odium of this cruelty by using the wretched creature as an appalling example of his justice and his power, Machiavelli wholly approves. His theory is that cruelty should be employed for certain definite purposes, but that the prince should endeavour to shun as far as possible the hatred it inspires. In justice both to Machiavelli and to Cesare, it should be said that the administration of Romagna was far better under the Borgia rule than it had ever been before. The exhibition of savage violence of which Machiavelli approves was perhaps needed to cow so brutalised a population.

In those chapters which Machiavelli has devoted to the exposition of the qualities that befit a prince, it is clear that Cesare Borgia was not unfrequently before his eyes.<sup>3</sup> The worst thing that can be said about Italy of the sixteenth century is that such an analyst as Machiavelli should have been able to idealise an adventurer whose egotistic immorality was so undisguised. The ethics of this profound anatomist of human motives were based upon a conviction that men are altogether bad. When discussing the question whether it be better to be loved or feared, Machiavelli decides that 'it is far safer to be feared than loved, if you must choose; seeing that you may say of men generally that they are ungrateful and changeable, dissemblers, apt to shun danger, eager for gain; as long as you serve them, they offer you everything, down to their very children, if you have no need; but when you want help, they fail you. Therefore it is best to put no faith in their pretended love.' This is language which could only be used in a country where loyalty was unknown and where all political and social combinations were founded upon force or convenience. Princes must, however, be cautious not to injure their subjects in their honour or their property—especially the latter, since men 'forget the murder of their fathers quicker than the loss of their money.' Under another heading Machiavelli returns to the same topic, and lays it down as an axiom that, since the large majority of men are bad, a prince must learn in self-defense how to be bad, and must use this science when and where he deems appropriate, endeavouring, however, under all circumstances to pass for good.

He brings the same desperate philosophy of life, the same bitter experience of mankind, to bear upon his discussion of the faith of princes.

<sup>3</sup> In a letter to Fr. Vettori (Jan. 31, 1514) he says: 'Il duca Valentino, l' opere del quale io imiterei sempre quando fossi principe nuovo.'

The chapter which is entitled 'How princes ought to keep their word' is one of the most brilliantly composed and thoroughly Machiavellian of the whole treatise. He starts with the assertion that to fight the battles of life in accordance with law is human, to depend on force is brutal; yet when the former method is insufficient, the latter must be adopted. A prince should know how to combine the natures of the man and of the beast; and this is the meaning of the mythus of Cheiron, who was made the tutor of Achilles. He should strive to acquire the qualities of the fox and of the lion, in order that he may both avoid snares and guard himself from wolves. A prudent prince cannot and must not keep faith when it is harmful to do so, or when the occasion under which he promised has passed by. He will always find colourable pretexts for breaking his word; and if he learns well how to feign, he will have but little difficulty in deceiving people. Among the innumerable instances of successful hypocrites Machiavelli can think of none more excellent than Alexander VI. 'He never did anything else but deceive men, nor ever thought of anything but this, and always found apt matter for his practice. Never was there a man who had a greater force and swearing and tying himself down to his engagements, or who observed them less. Nevertheless his wiles were always successful in the way he wished, because he well knew that side of the world.' It is curious that Machiavelli should have forgotten that the whole elaborate life's policy of Alexander and his son was ruined precisely by their falling into one of their own traps, and that the mistake or treason of a servant upset the calculations of the two most masterly deceivers of their age.<sup>4</sup> Following out the same line of thought, which implies that in a bad world a prince cannot afford to be good, Machiavelli asserts; 'It is not necessary that a prince should be merciful, loyal, humane, religious, just: nay, I will venture to say, that if he had all these qualities and always used them, they would harm him. But he must *seem* to have them, especially if he be new in his principality, where he will find it quite impossible to exercise these virtues, since in order to maintain his power he will be often obliged to act contrary to humanity, charity, religion.' Machiavelli does not advise him to become bad for the sake of badness, but to know when to quit the path of virtue for the preservation of his kingdom. 'He must take care to say nothing that is not full of these five qualities, and must always appear all mercy, all loyalty, all humanity, all justice, all religion, especially the last.' On the advantage of a reputation for piety Machiavelli insists most strongly. He points out how Ferdinand the Catholic used the pretext of religious zeal in order to achieve the conquest of Granada, to invade Africa, to expel the Moors, and how his perfidies in Italy, his perjuries to France, were coloured with a sanctimonious decency.

After reading these passages we feel that though it may be true that Machiavelli only spoke with scientific candour of the vices which were

<sup>4</sup> Perhaps this is an indirect argument against the legend of their death.

common to all statesman in his age —though the Italians were so corrupt that it seemed hopeless to deal fairly with them—yet there was a radical taint in the soul of the man who could have the heart to cull these poisonous herbs of policy and distil their juices to a quintessence for the use of the prince to whom he was confiding the destinies of Italy.<sup>5</sup> Almost involuntarily we remember the oath which Arthur administered to his knights, when he bade them 'never to do outrage nor murder, and always to flee treason; also by no means to be cruel, but to give mercy unto him that asked mercy, upon pain of forfeiture of their worship and lordship of King Arthur for evermore.' In a land where chivalry like this had ever taken root, either as an ideal or as an institution, the chapters of Machiavelli could scarcely have been published. The Italians lacked the virtues of knighthood. It was possible among them for the philosophers to teach the princes that success purchased at the expense of honour, loyalty, humanity, and truth might be illustrious.

It is refreshing to turn from those chapters in which Machiavelli teaches the prince how to cope with the world by using the vices of the wicked to his exposition of the military organisation suited to the maintenance of a great kingdom. Machiavelli has no mean or humble ambition for his prince: 'double will his glory be, who has founded a new realm, and fortified and adorned it with good laws, good arms, good friends, and good ensamples.' What the enterprise to which he fain would rouse Lorenzo really is, will appear in the conclusion. Meanwhile he encourages him by the example of Ferdinand the Catholic to gird his loins up for great enterprises. He bids him be circumspect in his choice of secretaries, seeing that 'the first opinion formed of a prince and of his capacity is derived from the men whom he has gathered round him.' He points out how he should shun flattery and seek respectful but sincere advice. Finally he reminds him that a prince is impotent unless he has command obedience by his arms. Fortresses are a doubtful source of strength, against foreign foes they are worse than useless; against subjects they are worthless in comparison with the goodwill of the people: 'the best fortress possible is to escape the hatred of your subjects.' Everything therefore depends upon the well-ordering of a national militia. The neglect of that ruined the princes of Italy and enabled Charles VIII. to conquer the fairest of European kingdoms with wooden spurs and a piece of chalk.<sup>6</sup>

In his discourse on armies Machiavelli lays it down that the troops with which a prince defends his state are either his own, or mercenaries, or auxiliaries, or mixed. 'Mercenary and auxiliary forces are both useless and perilous, and he who founds the security of his dominion on the

<sup>5</sup> In the *Discorsi*, lib. i. cap. 55, he calls Italy 'la corruttela del mondo,' and judges that her case is desperate; 'non si può sperare nelle provincie che in questi tempi si veggono corrotte, come è l' Italia sopra tutte le altre.'

<sup>6</sup> The references in this paragraph are made to chapters xx-xxiv. and chapter xii. of the *Principe*.

former will never be established firmly: seeing that they are disunited, ambitious, and undisciplined, without loyalty, truculent to their friends, cowardly among foes; they have no fear of God, no faith with men; you are only safe with them before they are attacked; in peace they plunder you; in war you are the prey of your enemies. The cause of this is that they have no other love nor other reason to keep the field beyond a little pay, which is far from sufficient to make them wish to die for you. They are willing enough to be your soldiers so long as you are at peace, but when war comes, their impulse is to fly or sneak away. It ought to be easy to establish the truth of this assertion, since the ruin of Italy is due to nothing else except this, that we have now for many years depended upon mercenary arms.<sup>7</sup> Here he touches the real weakness of the Italian States. Then he proceeds to explain further the rottenness of the Condottiere system. Captains of adventure are either men of ability or not. If they are, you have to fear lest their ambition prompt them to turn their arms against yourself or your allies. This happened to Queen Joan of Naples, who was deserted by Sforza Attendolo in her sorest need; to the Milanese, when Francesco Sforza made himself their Despot; to the Venetians, who were driven to decapitate Carmagnuola because they feared him. The only reason why the Florentines were not enslaved by Sir John Hawkwood was that, though an able general, he achieved no great successes in the field. In the same way they escaped by luck from Sforza, who turned his attention to Milan, and from Braccio, who formed designs against the Church and Naples. If Paolo Vitelli had been victorious against Pisa (1498), he would have held them at discretion. In each of these cases it was only the good fortune of the republic which saved it from a military despotism. If, on the other hand, the mercenary captains are men of no capacity, you are defeated in the field. Proceeding to the historical development of this bad system, Machiavelli points out how, after the decline of the Imperial authority in Italy, the Papacy and the republics got the upper hand. Priests and merchants were alike unwilling to engage in war. Therefore they took mercenary troops into their pay. The companies of the Sforzeschi and Bracceschi were formed; and 'after these came all those others who have ruled this sort of warfare down to our own days. The consequence of their valour is that Italy has been harried by Charles, plundered by Louis, forced by Ferdinand, insulted by the Swiss. Their method has been to enhance the reputation of their cavalry by depressing the infantry. Being without dominion of their own, and making war their commerce, a few foot soldiers brought them no repute, while they were unable to support many. Therefore they confined themselves to cavalry, until in a force of 20,000 men you could not number 2,000 infantry. Besides this they employed all their ingenuity to relieve themselves and their soldiers of fatigue and peril, by refraining from slaughter and from taking prisoners without

<sup>7</sup> See chapter xii. of the *Principe*.



ransom. Night attacks and sorties were abandoned; stockades and trenches in the camp were given up; no one thought of a winter campaign. All these things were allowed, or rather introduced, in order to avoid, as I have said, fatigue and peril. Whereby they have reduced Italy to slavery and insult.' Auxiliaries, such as French troops borrowed by Cesare Borgia, and the Spaniards engaged by Julius II., are even worse. 'He who wants to be unable to win the game should make use of these forces; for they are far more dangerous than mercenaries, seeing that in them the cause of ruin is ready made—they are united together, and inclined to obey their own masters.' Machiavelli enforces this moral by one of those rare but energetic figures which add virile dignity to his discourse. He compares auxiliary troops to the armour of Saul, which David refused, preferring to fight Goliath with his stone and sling. 'In one word, arms borrowed from another either fall from your back, or weigh you down, or impede your action.' It remains for a prince to form his own troops and to take the field in person, like Cesare Borgia, when he discarded his French allies and the mercenary aid of the Orsini captains. Republics should follow the same course, despatching, as the Romans did, their own citizens to the war, and controlling by law the personal ambition of victorious generals. It was thus that the Venetians prospered in their conquests, before they acquired their provinces in Italy and adopted the Condottiere system from their neighbours. 'A prince, therefore, should have but one object, one thought, one art—the art of war.' Those who have followed this rule have attained to sovereignty, like Francesco Sforza, who became Duke of Milan; those who have neglected it have lost even hereditary kingdoms, like the last Sforzas, who sank from dukedom into private life. Even amid the pleasures of the chase a prince should always be studying the geographical conformation of his country with a view to its defence, and should acquire a minute knowledge of such strategical laws as are everywhere applicable. He should read history with the same object, and should keep before his eyes the example of those great men of the past from whom he can learn lessons for his guidance in the present.

This brings us to the peroration of the 'Principe,' which contains the practical issue toward which the whole treatise has been tending, the patriotic thought that reflects a kind of lustre even on the darkest pages that have gone before. Like Thetis, Machiavelli has dipped his Achilles in the Styx of infernal counsels; like Cheiron, he has shown him how the human and the bestial natures should be combined in one who has to break the teeth of wolves and keep his feet from snares; like Hephaistos, he has forged for him invulnerable armour. The object toward which this preparation has been leading is the liberation of Italy from the barbarians. The slavery of Israel in Egypt, the oppression of the Persians by the Medes, the dispersion of the Athenians into villages, were the occasions which enabled Moses and Cyrus and Theseus to display their greatness. The new prince, who would fain win honour in



Italy and confer upon his country untold benefits, finds her at the present moment 'more enslaved than the Hebrews, more downtrodden than the Persians, more disunited than the Athenians, without a chief, without order, beaten, despoiled, mangled, overrun, subject to every sort of desolation.' Fortune could not have offered him a nobler opportunity. 'See how she prays God to send her some one who should save her from these barbarous cruelties and insults! See her all ready and alert to follow any standard, if only there be a man to raise it!' Then Machiavelli addresses himself to the chief of the Medici in person. 'Nor is there at the present moment any place more full of hope for her than your illustrious House, which by its valour and its fortune, favoured by God and by the Church, whereof it is now the head, might take the lead in this delivery.' This is followed by one of the rare passages of courtly rhetoric which, when Machiavelli condescends to indulge in them, add peculiar splendour to his style. Then he turns again to speak of the means which should immediately be used. He urges Lorenzo above all things to put no faith in mercenaries or auxiliaries, but to raise his own forces, and to rely on the Italian infantry. If Italian armies have always been defeated in the field during the past twenty years, it is not due so much to their defective courage as to the weakness of their commanders. Lorenzo will have to raise a force capable of coping with the Swiss, the Spanish, and the French. The respect with which Machiavelli speaks at this supreme moment of these foreign troops, proves how great was their prestige in Italy; yet he ventures to point out that there are faults peculiar to each of them: the Spanish infantry cannot stand a cavalry charge, and the Switzers are liable to be disconcerted by the rapid attack of the wiry infantry of Spain. It is therefore necessary to train troops capable of resisting cavalry, and not afraid of facing any foot soldiers in the world. 'This opportunity, therefore, must not be suffered to slip by; in order that Italy may after so long a time at last behold her saviour. Nor can I find words to describe the love with which he would be hailed in all the provinces that have suffered through these foreign deluges, the thirst for vengeance, the stubborn fidelity, the piety, the tears, that he would meet. What gates would be closed against him? What people would refuse him allegiance? What jealousy would thwart him? What Italian would be found to refuse him homage? This rule of the barbarians stinks in the nostrils of us all. Then let your illustrious House assume this enterprise in the spirit and the confidence wherewith just enterprises are begun, that so, under your flag, this land of ours may be ennobled, and under your auspices be brought to pass that prophecy of Petrarch:—

Lo, valour against rage  
Shall take up arms, nor shall the fight be long;  
For that old heritage  
Of courage in Italian hearts is stout and strong.'

With this trumpet-cry of impassioned patriotism the 'Principe' closes. Hegel, in his 'Philosophy of History,' has recorded a judgment of

Machiavelli's treatise in relation to the political conditions of Italy at the end of the mediæval period, which might be quoted as the most complete apology for the author to make. 'This book,' he says, 'has often been cast aside with horror as containing maxims of the most revolting tyranny; yet it was Machiavelli's high sense of the necessity of constituting a state which caused him to lay down the principles on which alone states could be formed under the circumstances. The isolated lords and lordships had to be entirely suppressed; and though our idea of Freedom is incompatible with the means which he proposes both as the only available and also as wholly justifiable—including, as these do, the most reckless violence, all kinds of deception, murder, and the like—yet we must confess that the Despots who had to be subdued were assailable in no other way, inasmuch as indomitable lawlessness and perfect depravity were thoroughly engrained in them.'

Yet after the book has been shut and the apology has been weighed, we cannot but pause and ask ourselves this question: Which was the truer patriot—Machiavelli, systematising the political vices and corruptions of his time in a philosophical essay, and calling on the Despot to whom it was dedicated to liberate Italy; or Savonarola, denouncing sin and enforcing repentance—Machiavelli, who taught as precepts of pure wisdom those very principles of public immorality which lay at the root of Italy's disunion and weakness; or Savonarola, who insisted that without a moral reformation no liberty was possible? We shall have to consider the action of Savonarola in another place. Meanwhile, it is not too much to affirm that, with diplomatists like Machiavelli, and with princes like those whom he has idealised, Italy could not be free. Hypocrisy, treachery, dissimulation, cruelty are the vices of the selfish and the enslaved. Yet Machiavelli was led by his study of the past and by his experience of the present to defend these vices, as the necessary qualities of the prince whom he would fain have chosen for the saviour of his country. It is legitimate to excuse him on the ground that the Italians of his age had not conceived a philosophy of right which should include duties as well as privileges, and which should guard the interests of the governed no less than those of the governor. It is true that the feudal conception of Monarchy, so well apprehended by him in the fourth chapter of the 'Principe,' had nowhere been realized in Italy, and that therefore the right solution of the political problem seemed to lie in setting force against force, and fraud against fraud, for a sublime purpose. It may also be urged with justice that the historians and speculators of antiquity, esteemed beyond their value by the students of the sixteenth century, confirmed him in his application of a positive philosophy to statecraft. The success which attended the violence and dissimulation of the Romans, as described by Livy, induced him to inculcate the principles on which they acted. The scientific method followed by Aristotle in the 'Politics' encouraged him in the adoption of a similar analysis; while the close parallel between ancient Greece and mediæval Italy was sufficient to create a conviction that the wisdom of

the old world would be precisely applicable to the conditions of the new. These, however, are exculpations of the man, rather than justifications of his theory. The theory was false and vicious. And the fact remains that the man, impregnated by the bad morality of the period in which he lived, was incapable of ascending above it to the truth, was impotent with all his acumen to read the deepest lessons of past and present history, and in spite of his acknowledged patriotism succeeded only in adding his conscious and unconscious testimony to the corruption of the country that he loved. The broad common-sense, the mental soundness, the humane instinct and the sympathy with nature, which give fertility and wholeness to the political philosophy of men like Burke, are absent in Machiavelli. In spite of its vigour, his system implies an inversion of the ruling laws of health in the body politic. In spite of its logical cogency, it is inconclusive by reason of defective premises. Incomparable as an essay in pathological anatomy, it throws no light upon the workings of a normal social organism, and has at no time been used with profit even by the ambitious and unscrupulous.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE POPES OF THE RENAISSANCE

*The Papacy between 1447 and 1527—The Contradictions of the Renaissance Period exemplified by the Popes—Relaxation of their hold over the States of the Church and Rome during the Exile in Avignon—Nicholas V.—His Conception of a Papal Monarchy—Pius II.—The Crusade—Renaissance Pontiffs—Paul II.—Persecution of the Platonists—Sixtus IV.—Nepotism—The Families of Riario and Della Rovere—Avarice—Love of Warfare—Pazzi Conspiracy—Inquisition in Spain—Innocent VIII.—Franceschetto Cibo—The Election of Alexander VI.—His Consolidation of the Temporal Power—Policy toward Colonna and Orsini Families—Venality of everything in Rome—Policy toward the Sultan—The Index—The Borgia Family—Lucrezia—Murder of Duke of Gandia—Cesare and his Advancement—The Death of Alexander—Julius II.—His violent Temper—Great Projects and commanding Character—Leo X.—His Inferiority to Julius—S. Peter's and the Reformation—Adrian VI.—His Hatred of Pagan Culture—Disgust of the Roman Court at his Election—Clement VII.—Sack of Rome—Enslavement of Florence.*

IN the fourteenth and the first half of the fifteenth centuries the authority of the Popes, both as Heads of the Church and as temporal rulers, had been impaired by exile in France and by ruinous schisms. A new era began with the election of Nicholas V. in 1447, and ended during the pontificate of Clement VII. with the sack of Rome in 1527. Through the whole of this period the Popes acted more as monarchs than as pontiffs, and the secularisation of the See of Rome was carried to its utmost limits. The contrast between the sacerdotal pretensions and the personal immorality of the Popes was glaring; nor had the chiefs of the Church yet learned to regard the liberalism of the Renaissance with suspicion. About the middle of the sixteenth century the Papal States had become a recognised kingdom; while the Popes of this later epoch were endeavouring by means of the Inquisition and the educational orders to check the free spirit of Italy.

The history of Italy has at all times been closely bound up with that of the Papacy; but at no period has this been more the case than during these eighty years of Papal worldliness, ambition, nepotism, and profligacy, which are also marked by the irruption of the European nations into Italy and by the secession of the Teutonic races from the Latin Church. In this short space of time a succession of Popes filled the Holy Chair with such dramatic propriety—displaying a pride so regal, a cynicism so unblushing, so selfish a cupidity, and a policy so suicidal as to favour the belief that they had been placed there in the providence of God to warn the world against Babylon. At the same time the his-

tory of the Papal Court reveals with peculiar vividness the contradictions of Renaissance morality and manners. We find in the Popes of this period what has been already noticed in the Despots—learning, the patronage of the arts, the passion for magnificence, and the refinements of polite culture, alternating and not unfrequently combined with barbarous ferocity of temper and with savage and coarse tastes. On the one side we observe a Pagan dissoluteness which would have scandalised the parasites of Commodus and Nero; on the other, a seeming zeal for dogma worthy of S. Dominic. The Vicar of Christ is at one time worshipped as a god by princes seeking absolution for sins or liberation from burdensome engagements; at another he is trampled under foot, in his capacity of sovereign, by the same potentates. Undisguised sensuality; fraud cynical and unabashed; policy marching to its end by murders, treasons, interdicts, and imprisonments; the open sale of spiritual privileges; commercial traffic in ecclesiastical emoluments; hypocrisy and cruelty studied as fine arts; theft and perjury reduced to system—these are the ordinary scandals which beset the Papacy. Yet the Pope is still a holy being. His foot is kissed by thousands. His curse and blessing carry death and life. He rises from the bed of harlots to unlock or bolt the gates of heaven and purgatory. In the midst of crime he believes himself to be the representative of Christ on earth. These anomalies, glaring as they seem to us, and obvious as they might be to deeper thinkers like Machiavelli or Savonarola, did not shock the mass of men who witnessed them. The Renaissance was so dazzling by its brilliancy, so confusing by its rapid changes, that moral distinctions were obliterated in a blaze of splendour, an outburst of new life, a carnival of liberated energies. The corruption of Italy was only equalled by its culture. Its immorality was matched by its enthusiasm. It was not the decay of an old age dying, so much as the fermentation of a new age coming into life, that bred the monstrous paradoxes of the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries. The contrast between mediæval Christianity and nascent Paganism—the sharp conflict of two adverse principles, destined to fuse their forces and to recompose the modern world—made the Renaissance what it was in Italy. Nowhere is the first effervescence of these elements so well displayed as in the history of those Pontiffs who, after striving in the Middle Ages to suppress humanity beneath a cowl, are now the chief actors in the comedy of Aphrodite and Priapus raising their foreheads once more to the light of day.

The struggle carried on between the Popes of the thirteenth century and the House of Hohenstauffen ended in the elevation of the Princes of Anjou to the throne of Naples—the most pernicious of all the evils inflicted by the Papal power on Italy. Then followed the French tyranny, under which Boniface VIII. expired at Anagni. Benedict XI. was poisoned at the instigation of Philip le Bel, and the Papal see was transferred to Avignon. The Popes lost their hold upon the city of Rome and upon those territories of Romagna, the March, and S. Peter's

Patrimony which had been confirmed to them by the grant of Rodolph of Hapsburg (1273). They had to govern their Italian dependencies by means of Legates, while, one by one, the cities which had recognised their sway passed beneath the yoke of independent princes. The Malatesti established themselves in Rimini, Pesaro, and Fano; the house of Montefeltro confirmed its occupation of Urbino; Camerino, Faenza, Ravenna, Forlì, and Imola became the appanages of the Varani, the Manfredi, the Polentani, the Ordellaffi, and the Alidosi.<sup>1</sup> The traditional supremacy of the Popes was acknowledged in these tyrannies; but the nobles I have named acquired a real authority, against which Egidio Albornoz and Robert of Geneva struggled to a great extent in vain, and to break which at a future period taxed the whole energies of Sixtus and of Alexander.

While the influence of the Popes was thus weakened in their states beyond the Apennines, three great families, the Orsini, the Savelli, and the Colonnese, grew to princely eminence in Rome and its immediate neighbourhood. They had been severally raised to power during the second half of the thirteenth century by the nepotism of Nicholas III., Honorius IV., and Nicholas IV. This nepotism bore baneful fruits in the future; for during the exile at Avignon the houses of Colonna and Orsini became so overbearing as to threaten the freedom and safety of the Popes. It was again reserved for Sixtus and Alexander to undo the work of their predecessors and to secure the independence of the Holy See by the coercion of these towering nobles.

In the States of the Church the temporal power of the Popes, founded upon false donations, confirmed by tradition, and contested by rival despots, was an anomaly. In Rome itself their situation, though different, was no less peculiar. While the factions of Orsini and Colonna divided the Campagna and wrangled in the streets of the city, Rome continued to preserve, in form at least, the old constitution of Caporioni and Senator. The Senator, elected by the people, swore, not to obey the Pope, but to defend his person. The government was ostensibly republican. The Pope had no sovereign rights, but only the ascendancy inseparable from his wealth and from his position as Primate of Christendom. At the same time the spirit of Arnold of Brescia, of Brancalione, and of Rienzi revived from time to time in patriots like Porcari and Baroncelli, who resented the encroachments of the Church upon the privileges of the city. Rome afforded no real security to the members of the Holy College. They commanded no fortress like the Castello of Milan, and had no army at their disposition. When the people or the nobles rose against them, the best they could do was to retire to Orvieto or Viterbo, and to wait the passing of the storm.

Such was the position of the Pope, considered as one of the ruling prince of Italy, before the election of Nicholas V. His authority was wide but undefined, confirmed by prescription, but based on neither

<sup>1</sup> See Mach. *Ist. Fior.* lib. i.

force nor legal right. Italy, however, regarded the Papacy as indispensable to her prosperity, while Rome was proud to be called the metropolis of Christendom, and ready to sacrifice the shadow of republican liberty for the material advantages which might accrue from the sovereignty of her bishop. How the Roman burghers may have felt upon this point we gather from a sentence of Leo Alberti's, referring to the administration of Nicholas: 'The city had become a city of gold through the jubilee; the dignity of the citizens was respected; all reasonable petitions were granted by the Pontiff. There were no exactions, no new taxes. Justice was fairly administered. It was the whole care of the Pontiff to adorn the city.'<sup>2</sup> The prosperity which the Papal Court brought to Rome was the main support of the Popes as princes, at a time when many thinkers looked with Dante's jealousy upon the union of temporal and spiritual functions in the Papacy.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the whole of Italy, as we have seen in the previous chapters, was undergoing a gradual and instinctive change in politics: commonwealths were being superseded by tyrannies, and the sentiments of the race at large were by no means unfavourable to this revolution. Now was the proper moment, therefore, for the Popes to convert their ill-defined authority into a settled despotism, to secure themselves in Rome as sovereigns, and to subdue the States of the Church to their temporal jurisdiction.

The work was begun by Thomas of Sarzana, who ascended the Chair of S. Peter, as Nicholas V., in 1447. One part of his biography belongs to the history of scholarship, and need not here be touched upon. Educated at Florence, under the shadow of the house of Medici, he had imbibed those principles of deference to princely authority which were supplanting the old republican virtues throughout Italy. The schisms which had rent the Catholic Church were healed; and finding no opposition to his spiritual power, he determined to consolidate the temporalities of his See. In this purpose he was confirmed by the conspiracy of Stefano Porcari, a Roman noble who had endeavoured to rouse republican enthusiasm in the city at the moment of the Pope's election, and who subsequently plotted against his liberty, if not his life. Porcari and his associates were put to death in 1453, and by this act the Pope proclaimed himself a monarch. The vast wealth which the jubilee of 1450 had poured into the Papal coffers<sup>4</sup> he employed in beautifying the city of Rome and in creating a stronghold for the Sovereign Pontiff. The mausoleum of Hadrian, used long before as a fortress in the Middle Ages, was now strengthened, while the bridge of S. Angelo and the Leonine city were so connected and defended by a system of walls and

<sup>2</sup> See history of Porcari's Conspiracy (Muratori, vol. xxv.)

<sup>3</sup> Lorenzo Vallo's famous declamation against the Donation of Constantine, which appeared during the pontificate of Nicholas, contained these reminiscences of the *De Monarchiâ*: 'Ut Papa tantum vicarius Christi sit et non etiam Cæsaris . . . tunc Papa et erit et dicetur pater sanctus, pater omnium, pater ecclesiæ.'

<sup>4</sup> The bank of the Medici alone held 100,000 florins for the Pope. Vespasiano, *Vit. Nic. V.*



outworks as to give the key of Rome into the hands of the Pope. A new Vatican began to rise, and the foundations of a nobler S. Peter's Church were laid within the circuit of the Papal domain. Nicholas had, in fact, conceived the great idea of restoring the supremacy of Rome, not after the fashion of a Hildebrand, by enforcing the spiritual despotism of the Papacy, but by establishing the Popes as kings, by renewing the architectural magnificence of the Eternal City, and by rendering his court the centre of European culture. In the will which he recited on his deathbed to the princes of the Church, he set forth all that he had done for the secular and ecclesiastical architecture of Rome, explaining his deep sense of the necessity of securing the Popes from internal revolution and external force, together with his desire to exalt the Church by rendering her chief seat splendid in the eyes of Christendom. This testament of Nicholas remains a memorable document. Nothing illustrates more forcibly the transition from the Middle Ages to the worldliness of the Renaissance than the conviction of the Pontiff that the destinies of Christianity depended on the state and glory of the town of Rome. What he began was carried on amid crime, anarchy, and bloodshed by successive Popes of the Renaissance, until at last the troops of Frundsberg paved the way, in 1527, for the Jesuits of Loyola, and Rome, still the Eternal City, cloaked her splendour and her scandals beneath the black pall of Spanish inquisitors. The political changes in the Papacy initiated by Nicholas had been, however, by that date fully accomplished, and for more than three centuries the Popes have since held rank among the kings of the earth.

Of Alfonso Borgia, who reigned for three years as Calixtus III., little need be said, except that his pontificate prepared for the greatness of his nephew, Roderigo Lenzuoli, known as Borgia in compliment to his uncle. The last days of Nicholas had been embittered by the fall of Constantinople and the imminent peril which threatened Europe from the Turks. The whole energies of Pius II. were directed towards the one end of uniting the European nations against the infidel. Æneas Sylvius Piccolomini, as an author, an orator, a diplomatist, a traveller, and a courtier, bears a name illustrious in the annals of the Renaissance. As a Pope, he claims attention for the single-hearted zeal which he displayed in the vain attempt to rouse the piety of Christendom against the foes of civilisation and the faith. Rarely has a greater contrast been displayed between the man and the pontiff than in the case of Pius. The pleasure-loving, astute, free-thinking man of letters and the world has become a Holy Father, jealous for Christian proprieties, and bent on stirring Europe by an appeal to motives which had lost their force three centuries before. Frederick II. and S. Louis closed the age of the Crusades, the one by striking a bargain with the infidel, the other by snatching at a martyr's crown. Æneas Sylvius Piccolomini was the mirror of his times—a humanist and stylist, imbued with the rhetorical and pseudo-classic taste of the earlier Renaissance. Pius II. is almost an anachronism. The disappointment which the learned world experi-

enced when they discovered that the new Pope, from whom so much had been expected, declined to play the part of their Mæcenas, may be gathered from the epigrams of Filelfo upon his death.<sup>5</sup>—

Gaudeat orator, Musæ gaudete Latinæ;  
Sustulit e medio quod Deus ipse Pium.  
Ut bene consuluit doctis Deus omnibus æque,  
Quos Pius in cunctos se tulit usque gravem.  
Nunc sperare licet. Nobis Deus optime Quintum  
Reddito Nocoleon Eugeniumve patrem.

and again:—

Hac sibi quam vivus construxit clauditur arca  
Corpore; nam Stygios mens habet atra lacus.

Pius himself was not unconscious of the discrepancy between his old and his new self. *Æneam rejicite, Pieum recipite*, he exclaims in a celebrated passage of his Retractation, where he declares his heartfelt sorrow for the irrevocable words of light and vain romance that he had scattered in his careless youth. Yet though Pius II. proved a virtual failure by lacking the strength to lead his age either backwards to the ideal of earlier Christianity or forwards on the path of modern culture, he is the last Pope of the Renaissance period whom we can regard with real respect. Those who follow, and with whose personal characters, rather than their action as Pontiffs, we shall now be principally occupied, sacrificed the interests of Christendom to family ambitions, secured their sovereignty at the price of discord in Italy, transacted with the infidel, and played the part of Antichrist upon the theatre of Europe.

It would be possible to write the history of these priest-kings without dwelling more than lightly on scandalous circumstances, to merge the court-chronicle of the Vatican in a recital of European politics, or to hide the true features of high Papal dignitaries beneath the masks constructed for them by ecclesiastical apologists. That cannot, however, be the line adopted by a writer treating of civilisation in Italy during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. He must paint the Popes of the Renaissance as they appeared in the midst of society, when Lorenzo de' Medici called Rome 'a sink of all the vices,' and observers so competent as Machiavelli and Guicciardini ascribed the moral depravity and political decay of Italy to their influence. It might be objected that there is now no need to portray the profligacy of that court which, by arousing the conscience of Northern Europe to a sense of intolerable shame, proved one of the main causes of the Reformation. But without reviewing those old scandals, a true understanding of Italian morality, and a true insight into Italian social feeling as expressed in literature, are alike impossible. Nor will the historian of this epoch shrink from his task, even though the transactions he has to record seem to savour of legend rather than of simple fact. No fiction contains matter more fantastic,

<sup>5</sup> Rosmini, *Vita di Filelfo*, vol. ii. p. 321.

no myth or allegory is more adapted to express a truth in figures of the fancy, than the authentic well-attested annals of this period of seventy years, from 1464 to 1534.

Paul II. was a Venetian named Pietro Barbi, who began life as a merchant. He had already shipped his worldly goods on board a trading vessel for a foreign trip, when news reached him that his uncle had been made Pope under the name of Eugenius IV. His call to the ministry consisted of the calculation that he could make his fortune in the Church with a Pope for uncle sooner than on the high seas by his wits. So he unloaded his bales took to his book, became a priest, and at the age of forty-eight rose to the Papacy. Being a handsome man, he was fain to take the ecclesiastical title of Formosus; but the Cardinals dissuaded him from this parade of vanity, and he assumed the tiara as Paul in 1464. A vulgar love of show was his ruling characteristic. He spent enormous sums in the collection of jewels, and his tiara alone was valued at 200,000 golden florins. In all public ceremonies, whether ecclesiastical or secular, he was splendid, delighting equally to sun himself before the eyes of the Romans as the chief actor in an Easter benediction or a Carnival procession. The poorer Cardinals received subsidies from his purse in order that they might add lustre to his pageants by their retinues. The arts found in him a munificent patron. For the building of the palace of S. Marco, which marks an abrupt departure from the previous Gothic style in vogue, he brought architects of eminence to Rome, and gave employment to Mino da Fiesole, the sculptor, and to Guiliiano da San Gallo, the wood-carver. The arches of Titus and Septimius Severus were restored at his expense, together with the statue of Marcus Aurelius and the horses of Monte Cavallo. But Paul showed his connoisseurship more especially in the collection of gems, medals, precious stones, and cameos, accumulating rare treasures of antiquity and costly masterpieces of Italian and Flemish goldwork in his cabinets. This patronage of contemporary art, no less than the appreciation of classical monuments, marked him as a Mæcenas of the true Renaissance type.<sup>6</sup> But the qualities of a dilettante were not cal-

<sup>6</sup> See *Les Arts à la Cour des Papes pendant le xv et le xvi Siècles*, E. Müntz, Paris, Thorin, 2me Partie. M. Müntz has done good service to æsthetic archæology by vindicating the fame of Paul II. as an employer of artists from the wholesale abuse heaped on him by Platina. It may here be conveniently noticed that even the fierce Sixtus IV. showed intelligence as a patron of arts and letters. He built the Sistine Chapel, and brought the greatest painters of the day to Rome—Signorelli, Perugino, Botticelli, Cosimo Rosselli, and Ghirlandajo. Melozzo da Forlì worked for him. One of that painter's few remaining masterpieces is the wall-picture, now in the Vatican, which represents Sixtus among his Cardinals and Secretaries—a magnificent piece of vivid portraiture. Sixtus again threw the Vatican library open to the public, and in his days the Confraternity of S. Luke was founded for the encouragement of design. Rome owes to him the hospital of S. Spirito, a severe building, by Baccio Pontelli, and the churches of S. Maria del Popolo and S. Maria della Pace. Innocent VIII. added the Belvedere to the Vatican after Antonio del Pollajuolo's plan, and commenced the Villa Magliana. Alexander VI. enriched the Vatican with the famous Borgia apartments, decorated by Pinturicchio. He also began the Palace of the University, and

culated to shed lustre on a Pontiff who spent the substance of the Church in heaping up immensely valuable curiosities. His thirst for gold and his love of hoarding were so extreme that, when bishoprics fell vacant, he often refused to fill them up, drawing their revenues for his own use. His court was luxurious, and in private he was addicted to sensual lust.<sup>7</sup> This would not, however, have brought his name into bad odour in Rome, where the Holy Father was already regarded as an Italian Despot with certain sacerdotal additions. It was his prosecution of the Platonists which made him unpopular in an age when men had the right to expect that, whatever happened, learning at least would be respected. The example of the Florentine and Neapolitan academies had encouraged the Romans to found a society for the discussion of philosophical questions. The Pope conceived that a political intrigue was the real object of this club. Nor was the suspicion wholly destitute of colour. The conspiracy of Porcari against Nicholas, and the Catilinarian riots of Tiburzio which had troubled the pontificate of Pius, were still fresh in people's memories; nor was the position of the Pope in Rome as yet by any means secure. What increased Paul's anxiety was the fact that some scholars, appointed secretaries of the briefs (*Abbreviatori*) by Pius and deprived of office by himself, were members of the Platonic Society. Their animosity against him was both natural and ill-concealed. At the same time the bitter hatred avowed by Laurentius Valla against the temporal power might in an age of conjurations have meant active malice. Leo Alberti hints that Porcari had been supported by strong backers outside Rome; and one of the accusations against the Platonists was that Pomponius Lætus had addressed Platina as Holy Father. Now both Pomponius Lætus and Valla had influence in Naples, while Paul was on the verge of open rupture with King Ferdinand. He therefore had sufficient grounds for suspecting a Neapolitan intrigue, in which the humanists were playing the parts of Brutus and Cassius. Yet though we take this trouble to construct some show of reason for the panic of the Pope, the fact remains that he was really mistaken at the outset; and of the stupidity, cruelty, and injustice of his subsequent conduct there can be no doubt. He seized the chief members of the Roman Academy, imprisoned them, put them to the torture, and killed some of them upon the rack. 'You would have taken Castle S. Angelo for Phalaris' bull,' writes Platina; 'the hollow vaults did so resound with the cries of innocent young men.' No evidence of a conspiracy could

converted the Mausoleum of Hadrian into the Castle of S. Angelo. These brief allusions must suffice. It is not the object of the present chapter to treat of the Popes as patrons; but it should not be forgotten that, having accepted a place among the Despots of Italy, they strove to acquit their debt to art and learning in the spirit of contemporary potentates.

<sup>7</sup> Corio sums up his character thus: 'Fu costui uomo alla libidine molto proclivo; in grandissimo precio furono le gioie appresso di lui. Del giorno faceva notte, e la notte ispediva quanto gli occorreva.' Marcus Attilius Alexius says: 'Paulus II. ex concubinâ domum replevit, et quasi sterquilinum facta est sedes Barionis.' See Gregorovius, *Stadt Rom*, vol. vii. p. 215, for the latter quotation.

be extorted. Then Paul tried the survivors for unorthodoxy. They proved the soundness of their faith to the satisfaction of the Pope's inquisitors. Nothing remained but to release them, or to shut them up in dungeons, in order that people might not say the Holy Father had arrested them without due cause. The latter course was chosen. Platina, the historian of the Popes, was one of the *abbreviatori* whom Paul had cashiered, and one of the Platonists whom he had tortured. The tale of Papal persecution loses, therefore, nothing in the telling; for if the humanists of the fifteenth century were powerful in anything, it was in writing innuendoes and invectives. Among other anecdotes, he relates how, while he was being dislocated on the rack, the inquisitors Vianesi and Sanga held a sprightly colloquy about a ring which the one said jestingly the other had received as a love-token from a girl. The whole situation is characteristic of Papal Rome in the Renaissance.

Paul did not live as long as his comparative youth led people to anticipate. He died of apoplexy in 1471, alone and suddenly, after supping on two huge water-melons, *duos prægrandes pepones*. His successor was a man of base extraction, named Francesco della Rovere, born near the town of Savona, on the Genoese Riviera. It was his whim to be thought noble; so he bought the goodwill of the ancient house of Rovere of Turin by giving them two cardinals' hats, and proclaimed himself their kinsman. Theirs is the golden oak-tree on an azure ground which Michael Angelo painted on the roof of the Sistine Chapel in compliment to Sixtus and his nephew Julius. Having bribed the most venal members of the Sacred College, Francesco della Rovere was elected Pope, and assumed the name of Sixtus IV. He began his career with a lie; for though he succeeded to the avaricious Paul, who had spent his time in amassing money which he did not use, he declared that he had only found 5,000 florins in the Papal treasury. This assertion was proved false by the prodigality with which he lavished wealth immediately upon his nephews. It is difficult even to hint at the horrible suspicions which were cast upon the birth of two of the Pope's nephews and upon the nature of his weakness for them. Yet the private life of Sixtus rendered the most monstrous stories plausible, while his public treatment of these men recalled to mind the partiality of Nero for Doryphorus.<sup>8</sup> We may, however, dwell upon the principal features of his nepotism; for Sixtus was the first Pontiff who deliberately organised a system for pillaging the Church in order to exalt his family to principalities. The

<sup>8</sup> The infamous stories about Sixtus and Alexander may in part be fables, currently reported by the vulgar and committed to epigrams by scholars. Still the fact remains that Infessura, Burchard, and the Venetian ambassadors relate of these two Popes such traits of character and such abominable actions as render the worst calumnies probable. Infessura, though he expressed horror for the crimes of Sixtus, was yet a dry chronicler of daily events, many of which passed beneath his own eyes. Burchard was a frigid diarist of Court ceremonies, who reported the rapes, murders, and profigacies of Alexander with phlegmatic gravity. The evidence of these men, neither of whom indulges in satire strictly so called, is more valuable than that of Tacitus or Suetonius to the vices of the Roman emperors. The despatches of the Venetian ambassadors, again, are trustworthy, seeing they were always written with political intention and not for the sake of gossip.

weakness of this policy has already been exposed<sup>9</sup>; its justification, if there is any, lies in the exigencies of a dynasty which had no legitimate or hereditary succession. The names of the Pope's nephews were Lionardo, Giuliano, and Giovanni della Rovere, the three sons of his brother Raffaello; Pietro and Girolamo Riario, the two sons of his sister Jolanda; and Girolamo, the son of another sister married to Giovanni Basso. With the notable exception of Giuliano della Rovere,<sup>10</sup> these young men had no claim to distinction beyond good looks and a certain martial spirit which ill suited with the ecclesiastical dignities thrust upon some of them. Lionardo was made prefect of Rome and married to a natural daughter of King Ferdinand of Naples. Giulano received a cardinal's hat, and, after a tempestuous warfare with the intervening Popes, ascended the Holy Chair as Julius II. Girolamo Basso was created Cardinal of San Crisogono in 1477, and died in 1507. Girolamo Riario wedded Catherine, a natural daughter of Galeazzo Sforza. For him the Pope in 1473 bought the town of Imola with money of the Church, and after adding to it Forlì, made Girolamo a Duke. He was murdered by his subjects in the latter place in 1488, not, however, before he had founded a line of princes. Pietro, another nephew of the Riario blood, or, as scandal then reported and Muratori has since believed, a son of the Pope himself, was elevated at the age of twenty-six to the dignities of Cardinal, Patriarch of Constantinople, and Archbishop of Florence. He had no virtues, no abilities, nothing but his beauty, the scandalous affection of the Pope, and the extravagant profligacy of his own life to recommend him to the notice of posterity. All Italy during two years rang with the noise of his debaucheries. His official revenues were estimated at 60,000 golden florins; but in his short career of profligate magnificence he managed to squander a sum reckoned at not less than 200,000. When Leonora of Aragon passed through Rome on her way to wed the Marquis of Ferrara, this fop of a Patriarch erected a pavilion in the Piazza de' Santi Apostoli for her entertainment.<sup>11</sup> The square was partitioned into chambers communicating with the palace of the Cardinal. The ordinary hangings were of velvet and of white and crimson silk, while one of the apartments was draped with the famous tapestries of Nicholas V., which represented the Creation of the World. All the utensils in this magic dwelling were of silver—even to the very vilest. The air of the banquet-hall was cooled with punkahs; *tre mantici coperti, che facevano continuoamente vento*, are the words of Corio; and on a column in the centre stood a living naked gilded boy, who poured forth water from an urn. The description of the feast takes up three pages of the history of Corio, where we find a minute list of the dishes—wild boars and deer and peacocks, roasted whole; peeled oranges, gilt and

<sup>9</sup> See ch. iii. p. 88.

<sup>10</sup> As Julius II., by far the greatest name in his age. Yet even Guiliiano did not at first impress men with his power. Jacobus Volaterranus (Mur. xxiii. 107) writes of him: 'Vir est naturæ duriusculæ, acuti ingenii, mediocris literaturæ.'

<sup>11</sup> For what follows read Corio, *Storia di Milano*, pp. 417-20.



sugared; gilt rolls; rosewater for washing; and the tales of Perseus, Atalanta, Hercules, &c., wrought in pastry—*tutte in vivande*. We are also told how masques of Hercules, Jason and Phædra alternated with the story of Susannah and the Elders, played by Florentine actors, and with the Mysteries of *San Giovan Battista decapitato* and *quel Giudeo che rosti il corpo di Cristo*. The servants were arrayed in silk, and the seneschal changed his dress of richest stuffs and jewels four times in the course of the banquet. Nymphs and centaurs, singers and buffoons, drank choice wine from golden goblets. The most eminent and reverend master of the palace, meanwhile, moved among his guests 'like some great Cæsar's son.' The whole entertainment lasted from Saturday till Thursday, during which time Ercole of Este and his bride assisted at Church ceremonies in S. Peter's, and visited the notabilities of Rome in the intervals of games, dances, and banquets of the kind described. We need scarcely add that, in spite of his enormous wealth, the young Cardinal died 60,000 florins in debt. Happily for the Church and for Italy, he expired at Rome in January 1474, after parading his impudent debaucheries through Milan and Venice as the Pope's Legate. It was rumoured, but never well authenticated, that the Venetians helped his death by poison.<sup>12</sup> The sensual indulgences of every sort in which this child of the proletariat, suddenly raised to princely splendour, wallowed for twenty-five continuous months, are enough to account for his immature death without the hypothesis of poisoning. With him expired a plan which might have ended in making the Papacy a secular, hereditary kingdom. During his stay at Milan, Pietro struck a bargain with the Duke, by the terms of which Galeazzo Maria Sforza was to be crowned King of Lombardy, while the Cardinal Legate was to return and seize upon the Papal throne.<sup>13</sup> Sixtus, it is said, was willing to abdicate in his nephew's favour, with a view to the firmer establishment of his family in the tyranny of Rome. The scheme was a wild one, yet, considering the power and wealth of the Sforza family, not so wholly impracticable as might appear. The same dream floated, a few years later, before the imagination of the two Borgias; and Machiavelli wrote in his calm style that to make the Papal power hereditary was all that remained for nepotism in his days to do.<sup>14</sup> The opinion which had been conceived of the Cardinal of San Sisto during his two years of eminence may be gathered from the following couplets of an epigram placed, as Corio informs us, on his tomb:—

Fur, scortum, leno, mœchus, pedico, cynædus,  
 Et scurra, et fidicen cedat ab Italiâ.  
 Namque illa Ausonii pestis scelerata senatûs,  
 Petrus, ad infernas est modo raptus aquas.

<sup>12</sup> Mach. *Ist. Fior.* lib. vii.; Corio, p. 420.

<sup>13</sup> See Corio, p. 410. Corio hints that the Venetians poisoned the Cardinal for fear of this convention being carried out.

<sup>14</sup> *Ist. Fior.* lib. i. vol. i. p. 38.



After the death of Pietro, Sixtus took his last nephew, Giovanni della Rovere, into like favour. He was married to Giovanna, daughter of Federico di Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino, and created Duke of Sinigaglia. Afterwards he became Prefect of Rome, upon the death of his brother Lionardo. This man founded the second dynasty in the Dukedom of Urbino. The plebian violence of the della Rovere temper reached a climax in Giovanni's son, the Duke Francesco Maria, who murdered his sister's lover with his own hand when a youth of sixteen, stabbed the Papal Legate to death in the streets of Bologna at the age of twenty, and knocked Guicciardini, the historian, down with a blow of his fist during a council of war in 1526.

Sixtus, however, while thus providing for his family, could not enjoy life without some youthful protégé about his person. Accordingly in 1463 he made his valet, a lad of no education and of base birth, Cardinal and Bishop of Parma at the age of twenty. His merit was the beauty of a young Olympian. With this divine gift he luckily combined a harmless though stupid character.

With all these favourites to plant out in life, the Pope was naturally short of money. He relied on two principal methods for replenishing his coffers. One was the public sale of places about the Court at Rome, each of which had its well-known price.<sup>15</sup> Benefices were disposed of with rather more reserve and privacy, for simony had not yet come to be considered venial. Yet it was notorious that Sixtus held no privilege within his pontifical control on which he was not willing to raise money: 'Our churches, priests, altars, sacred rites, our prayers, our heaven, our very God, are purchasable!' exclaims a scholar of the time; while the Holy Father himself was wont to say, 'A pope needs only pen and ink to get what sum he wants.'<sup>16</sup> The second great financial expedient was the monopoly of corn throughout the Papal States. Fictitious dearths were created; the value of wheat was raised to famine prices; good grain was sold out of the kingdom, and bad imported in exchange; while Sixtus forced his subjects to purchase from his stores, and made a profit by the hunger and disease of his emaciated provinces. Ferdinand, the King of Naples, practised the same system in the south. It is worth while to hear what this bread was like from one of the men condemned to eat it: 'The bread made from the corn of which I have spoken was

<sup>15</sup> The greatest ingenuity was displayed in promoting this market. Infessura writes: 'Multa et inexcogitata in Curia Romanâ officia adinvenit et vendidit,' p. 1183.

<sup>16</sup> Baptista Mantuanus, *de Calamitatibus Temporum*, lib. iii.

Venalia nobis

Templa, sacerdotes, altaria, sacre, coronæ,

Ignes, thura, preces, cœlum est venale, Deusque.

Soriano, the Venetian ambassador, ap. Alberi ii. 3, p. 330, writes: 'Conviene ricordarsi quello che solea dire Sisto IV., che il papa bastava solo la mano con la penna e l' inchiostro, per avere quella somma che vuole.' Cp. *Æn. Sylv. Picc. Ep. i. 66*: 'Nihil est quod absque argento Romano Curia dedat; nam et ipsæ manus impositiones et Spiritus Sancti dona venduntur, nec peccatorum venia nisi nummatis impenditur'.

black, stinking, and abominable; one was obliged to consume it, and from this cause sickness frequently took hold upon the State.<sup>17</sup>

But Christendom beheld in Sixtus not merely the spectacle of a Pope who trafficked in the bodies of his subjects and the holy things of God, to squander basely gotten gold upon abandoned minions. The peace of Italy was destroyed by desolating wars in the advancement of the same worthless favourites. Sixtus desired to annex Ferrara to the dominions of Girolamo Riario. Nothing stood in his way but the House of Este, firmly planted for centuries, and connected by marriage or alliance with all the chief families of Italy. The Pope, whose lust for blood and broils was only equalled by his avarice and his libertinism,<sup>18</sup> rushed with wild delight into a project which involved the discord of the whole Peninsula. He made treaties with Venice and unmade them, stirred up all the passions of the Despots and set them together by the ears, called the Swiss mercenaries into Lombardy, and when finally, tired of fighting for his nephew, the Italian powers concluded the peace of Bagnolo, he died of rage in 1484. The Pope did actually die of disappointed fury because peace had been restored to the country he had mangled for the sake of a favourite nephew.

The crime of Sixtus which most vividly paints the corruption of the Papacy in his age remains still to be told. This was the sanction of the Pazzi Conjuraction against Giuliano and Lorenzo de' Medici. In the year 1477 the Medici, after excluding the merchant princes of the Pazzi family from the magistracy at Florence and otherwise annoying them, had driven Francesco de' Pazzi in disgust to Rome. Sixtus chose him for his banker in the place of the Medicean Company. He became intimate with Girolamo Riario, and was well received at the Papal Court. Political reasons at this moment made the Pope and his nephew anxious to destroy the Medici, who opposed Girolamo's schemes of aggrandisement in Lombardy. Private rancour induced Francesco de' Pazzi to second their views and to stimulate their passion. The three between them hatched a plot which was joined by Salviati, Archbishop of Pisa, another private foe of the Medici, and by Giambattista Montesecco, a

<sup>17</sup> *Infessura, Eccardus*, vol. ii. p. 1941: 'Panis vero qui ex dicto frumento fiebat, erat ater, foetidus, et abominabilis; et ex necessitate comedebatur, ex quo sæpenumero in civitate morbus viguit.'

<sup>18</sup> This phrase requires support. *Infessura* (loc. cit. p. 1941) relates the savage pleasure with which Sixtus watched a combat 'a steccato chiuso.' Hearing that a duel to the death was to be fought by two bands of his body-guard, he told them to choose the Piazza of S. Peter for their rendezvous. Then he appeared at a window, blessed the combatants, and crossed himself as a signal for the battle to begin. We who think the ring, the cockpit, and the bullfight barbarous, should study Pollajuolo's engraving in order to imagine the horrors of a duel 'a steccato chiuso.' Of the inclination of Sixtus to sensuality, *Infessura* writes: 'Hic, ut fertur vulgo, et experientia demonstravit, puerorum amator et sodomita fuit.' After mentioning the Riarii and a barber's son, aged twelve, he goes on: 'taceo nunc alia, quæ circa hoc possent recitari, quia visa sunt de continuo.' It was not, perhaps, a wholly Protestant calumny which accused Sixtus of granting private indulgences for the commission of abominable crimes in certain seasons of the year.

captain well affected to the Count Girolamo. The first design of the conspirators was to lure the brothers Medici to Rome, and to kill them there. But the young men were too prudent to leave Florence. Pazzi and Salviati then proceeded to Tuscany, hoping either at a banquet or in church to succeed in murdering their two enemies together. Bernardo Bandini, a man of blood by trade, and Francesco de Pazzi were chosen to assassinate Giuliano. Giambattista Montesecco undertook to dispose of Lorenzo.<sup>19</sup> The 26th of April, 1478 was finally fixed for the deed. The place selected was the Duomo.<sup>20</sup> The elevation of the Host at Mass-time was to be the signal. Both the Medici arrived. The murderers embraced Giuliano and discovered that this timid youth had left his secret coat of mail at home. But a difficulty, which ought to have been foreseen, arose. Montesecco, cut-throat as he was, refused to stab Lorenzo before the high altar; at the last moment some sense of the *religio loci* dashed his courage. Two priests were then discovered who had no such silly scruples. In the words of an old chronicle, 'Another man was found, who, *being a priest*, was more accustomed to the place and therefore less superstitious about its sanctity.' This, however, spoiled all. The priests, though more sacrilegious than the bravos, were less used to the trade of assassination. They failed to strike home. Giuliano, it is true, was stabbed to death by Bernardo Bandini and Francesco de' Pazzi at the very moment of the elevation of Christ's body. But Lorenzo escaped with a slight flesh wound. The whole conspiracy collapsed. In the retaliation which the infuriated people of Florence took upon the murderers, the Archbishop Salviati, together with Jacopo and Francesco de' Pazzi and some others among the principal conspirators, were hanged from the windows of the Palazzo Pubblico. For this act of violence to the sacred person of a traitorous priest, Sixtus, who had upon his own conscience the crime of mingled treason, sacrilege, and murder, excommunicated Florence, and carried on for years a savage war with the Republic. It was not until 1481, when the descent of the Turks upon Otranto made him tremble for his own safety, that he chose to make peace with these enemies whom he had himself provoked and plotted against.

<sup>19</sup> His 'Confession,' printed by Fabroni, *Lorenzi Medicis Vita*, vol. ii. p. 168, gives an interesting account of the hatching of the plot. It is fair to Sixtus to say that Montesecco exculpates him of the design to murder the Medici. He only wanted to ruin them.

<sup>20</sup> It is curious to note how many of the numerous Italian tyrannicides took place in church. The Chiavelli of Fabriano were murdered during a solemn service in 1435; the sentence of the creed 'Et incarnatus est' was chosen for the signal. Gian Maria Visconti was killed in San Gottardo (1412), Galeazzo Maria Sforza in San Stefano (1484). Lodovico Moro only just escaped assassination in Sant' Ambrogio (1484). Machiavelli says that Lorenzo de' Medici's life was attempted by Battista Frescobaldi in the Carmine (see *Ist. Fior.* book viii. near the end). The Baglioni of Perugia were to have been massacred during the marriage festival of Astorre with Lavinia Colonna (1500). Stefano Porcari intended to capture Nicholas V. at the great gate of S. Peter's (1453). The only chance of catching cautious princes off their guard was when they were engaged in high solemnities. See above, pp. 84, 85.

Another peculiarity in the Pontificate of Sixtus deserves special mention. It was under his auspices in the year 1478 that the Inquisition was founded in Spain for the extermination of Jews, Moors, and Christians with a taint of heresy. During the next four years 2,000 victims were burned in the province of Castile. In Seville, a plot of ground, called the Quemadero, or place of burning—a new Aceldama—was set apart for executions; and here in one year 280 heretics were committed to the flames, while 79 were condemned to perpetual imprisonment, and 17,000 to lighter punishments of various kinds. In Andalusia alone 5,000 houses were at once abandoned by their inhabitants. Then followed in 1492 the celebrated edict against the Jews. Before four months had expired the whole Jewish population were bidden to leave Spain, carrying with them nothing in the shape of gold or silver. To convert their property into bills of exchange and movables was their only resource. The market speedily was glutted: a house was given for an ass, a vineyard for a suit of clothes. Vainly did the persecuted race endeavour to purchase a remission of the sentence by the payment of an exorbitant ransom. Torquemada appeared before Ferdinand and his consort, raising the crucifix, and crying: 'Judas sold Christ for 30 pieces of silver; sell ye him for a larger sum, and account for the same to God!' The exodus began. Eight hundred thousand Jews left Spain<sup>21</sup>—some for the coast of Africa, where the Arabs ripped their bodies up in search for gems or gold they might have swallowed, and deflowered their women—some for Portugal, where they bought the right to exist for a large head-tax, and where they saw their sons and daughters dragged away to baptism before their eyes. Others were sold as slaves, or had to satisfy the rapacity of their persecutors with the bodies of their children. Many flung themselves into the wells, and sought to bury despair in suicide. The Mediterranean was covered with famine-stricken and plague-breeding fleets of exiles. Putting into the port of Genoa, they were refused leave to reside in the city, and died by hundreds in the harbour.<sup>22</sup> Their festering bodies bred a pestilence along the whole Italian sea-board, of which at Naples alone 20,000 persons died. Flitting from shore to shore, these forlorn spectres, the victims of bigotry and avarice, everywhere pillaged and everywhere rejected, dwindled away and disappeared. Meanwhile the orthodox rejoiced. Pico della Mirandola, who spent his life in reconciling Plato with the Cabala, finds nothing more to say than this: 'The sufferings of the Jews, in which the glory of the Divine justice delighted, were so extreme as to fill us Christians with commiseration.' With these words we may compare the following passage from Senarega: 'The matter at

<sup>21</sup> This number is perhaps exaggerated. Limborch in his *History of the Inquisition* (p. 83) gives both 800,000 and 400,000; he also speaks of 170,000 *families* as one calculation.

<sup>22</sup> Senarega's account of the entry of the Jews into Genoa is truly awful. He was an eye-witness of what he relates. The passage may be read in Prescott's *Ferdinand and Isabella*, chapter 17.

first sight seemed praiseworthy, as regarding the honour done to our religion; yet it involved some amount of cruelty, if we look upon them, not as beasts, but as men, the handiwork of God.' A critic of this century can only exclaim with stupefaction: *Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum!* Thus Spain began to devour and depopulate herself. The curse which fell upon the Jew and Moor descended next upon philosopher and patriot. The very life of the nation, in its commerce, its industry, its free thought, its energy of character, was deliberately and steadily throttled. And at no long interval of time the blight of Spain was destined to descend on Italy, paralysing the fair movements of her manifold existence to a rigid uniformity, shrouding the light and colour of her art and letters in the blackness of inquisitorial gloom.

Most singular is the attitude of a Sixtus—indulging his lust and pride in the Vatican, adorning the chapel called after his name with masterpieces,<sup>23</sup> rending Italy with broils for the aggrandisement of favourites, haggling over the prices to be paid for bishoprics, extorting money from starved provinces, plotting murder against his enemies, hounding the semi-barbarous Swiss mountaineers on Milan by indulgences, refusing aid to Venice in her championship of Christendom against the Turk—yet meanwhile thinking to please God by holocausts of Moors, by myriads of famished Jews, conferring on a faithless and avaricious Ferdinand the title of Catholic, endeavouring to wipe out his sins by the blood of others, to burn his own vices in the *autos de fé* of Seville, and by the foundation of that diabolical engine the Inquisition to secure the fabric his own infamy was undermining.<sup>24</sup> This is not the language of a Protestant denouncing the Pope. With all respect for the Roman Catholic Church, that Alma Mater of the Middle Ages, that august and venerable monument of immemorial antiquity, we cannot close our eyes to the contradictions between practice and pretension upon which the History of the Italian Renaissance throws a light so lurid.

After Sixtus IV. came Innocent VIII. His secular name was Giambattista Cibo. The Sacred College, terrified by the experience of Sixtus into thinking that another Pope, so reckless in his creation of scandalous Cardinals, might ruin Christendom, laid the most solemn obligations on the Pope elect. Cibo took oaths on every relic, by every saint, to every

<sup>23</sup> Musing beneath the Sibyls and before the Judgment of Michael Angelo, it is difficult not to picture to the fancy the arraignment of the Popes who built and beautified that chapel, when the Christ, whose blood they sold, should appear with His menacing right arm uplifted, and the prophets should thunder their denunciations: 'Howl, ye shepherds; and cry; and wallow yourselves in the ashes, ye principal of the flock, for the days of your slaughter and your dispersions are accomplished.'

<sup>24</sup> The same incongruity appears also in Innocent VIII., whose bull against witchcraft (1484) systematised the persecution directed against unfortunate old women and idiots. Sprenger, in the *Malleus Maleficarum*, mentions that in the first year after its publication forty-one witches were burned in the district of Como, while crowds of suspected women took refuge in the province of the Archduke Sigismund. Canth's *Storia della Diocesi di Como* (Le Monnier, 2 vols.) may be consulted for the persecution of witches in Valtellina and Val Camonica. Cp. Folengo's *Maccaronea* for the prevalence of witchcraft in those districts.

member of the Conclave, that he would maintain a certain order of appointment and a purity of election in the Church. No Cardinal under the age of 30, not more than one of the Pope's own blood, none without the rank of Doctor of Theology or Law, was to be elected, and so forth. But as soon as the tiara was on his head, he renounced them all as inconsistent with the rights and liberties of S. Peter's Chair. Engagements made by the man might always be broken by the Pope. Of Innocent's Pontificate little need be said. He was the first Pope publicly to acknowledge his seven children, and to call them sons and daughters.<sup>25</sup> Avarice, venality, sloth, and the ascendancy of base favourites made his reign loathsome without the blaze and splendour of the scandals of his fiery predecessor. In corruption he advanced a step even beyond Sixtus, by establishing a bank at Rome for the sale of pardons.<sup>26</sup> Each sin had its price, which might be paid at the convenience of the criminal: 150 ducats of the tax were poured into the Papal coffers; the surplus fell to Franceschetto, the Pope's son. This insignificant princeling, for whom the county of Anguillara was purchased, showed no ability or ambition for aught but getting and spending money. He was small of stature and tame-spirited; yet the destinies of an important house of Europe depended on him; for his father married him to Maddalena, the daughter of Lorenzo de' Medici, in 1487. This led to Giovanni de' Medici receiving a cardinal's hat at the age of thirteen, and thus the Medicean interest in Rome was founded; in the course of a few years the Medici gave two Popes to the Holy See, and by their ecclesiastical influence riveted the chains of Florence fast.<sup>27</sup> The traffic which Innocent and Franceschetto carried on in theft and murder filled the Campagna with brigands and assassins.<sup>28</sup> Travellers and pilgrims and ambassadors were stripped and murdered on their way to Rome; and in the city itself more than two hundred people were publicly assassinated with impunity during the last months of the Pope's life. He was gradually dozing off into his last long sleep, and Franceschetto was planning how to carry off his ducats. While the Holy Father still hovered be-

<sup>25</sup> 'Primus pontificum filios filiasque palam ostentavit, primus eorum apertas fecit nuptias, primus domesticos hymenæose celebravit.' Egidius of Viterbo, quoted by Greg. *Stadt Rom*, vol. vii. p. 274, note.

<sup>26</sup> Infessura says he heard the Vice-Chancellor, when asked why criminals were allowed to pay instead of being punished, answer: 'God wills not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should pay and live.' Dominico di Viterbo, Apostolic Scribe, forged bulls by which the Pope granted indulgences for the commission of the worst scandals. His father tried to buy him off for 5,000 ducats. Innocent replied that, as his honour was concerned, he must have 6,000. The poor father could not scrape so much money together; so the bargain fell through, and Dominico was executed. A Roman who had killed two of his own daughters bought his pardon for 800 ducats.

<sup>27</sup> Guicciardini, i. 1, points out that Lorenzo, having the Pope for his ally, was able to create that balance of power in Italy which it was his chief political merit to have maintained until his death.

<sup>28</sup> It is only by reading the pages of Infessura's *Diary* (Eccardus, vol. ii. pp. 2003-2005) that any notion of the mixed debauchery and violence of Rome at this time can be formed.



tween life and death, a Jewish doctor proposed to reinvigorate him by the transfusion of young blood into his torpid veins. Three boys throbbing with the elixir of early youth were sacrificed in vain. Each boy, says Infessura, received one ducat. He adds, not without grim humour: 'Et paulo post mortui sunt; Judæus quidem aufugit, et Papa non sanatus est.' The epitaph of this poor old Pope reads like a rather clever but blasphemous witticism: 'Ego autem in Innocentiâ meâ ingressus sum.'

Meanwhile the Cardinals had not been idle. The tedious leisure of Innocent's long lethargy was employed by them in active simony. Simony, it may be said in passing, gave the great Italian families a direct interest in the election of the richest and most paying candidate. It served the turn of a man like Ascanio Sforza to fatten the golden goose that laid such eggs, before he killed it—in other words, to take the bribes of Innocent and Alexander, while deferring for a future time his own election. All the Cardinals, with the exception of Roderigo Borgia,<sup>29</sup> were the creatures of Sixtus or of Innocent. Having bought their hats with gold, they were now disposed to sell their votes to the highest bidder. The Borgia was the richest, strongest, wisest, and most worldly of them all. He ascertained exactly what the price of each suffrage would be, and laid his plans accordingly. The Cardinal Ascanio Sforza, brother of the Duke of Milan, would accept the lucrative post of Vice-Chancellor. The Cardinal Orsini would be satisfied with the Borgia Palaces at Rome and the Castles of Monticello and Saviano. The Cardinal Colonna had a mind for the Abbey of Subbiaco with its fortresses. The Cardinal of S. Angelo preferred the comfortable Bishopric of Porto with its palace stocked with choice wines. The Cardinal of Parma would take Nepi. The Cardinal of Genoa was bribable with the Church of S. Maria in Via Lata. Less influential members of the Conclave sold themselves for gold: to meet their demands the Borgia sent Ascanio Sforza four mules laden with coin in open day, requesting him to distribute it in proper portions to the voters. The fiery Giuliano della Rovere remained implacable and obdurate. In the Borgia his vehement temperament perceived a fit antagonist. The armour which he donned in their first encounters he never doffed, but waged fierce war with the whole brood of Borgias at Ostia, at the French Court, in Romagna, wherever and whenever he found opportunity.<sup>30</sup> He and five other Cardinals—among them his cousin Raphael Riario—refused to sell their votes. But Roderigo Borgia, having corrupted the rest of the College, assumed the mantle of S. Peter in 1492, with the ever-memorable title of Alexander VI.

Rome rejoiced. The Holy City attired herself in festival array,

<sup>29</sup> Roderigo was the son of Isabella Borgia, niece of Pope Calixtus III., by her marriage with Joffrè Lenzuoli. He took the name of Borgia, when he came to Rome to be made Cardinal, and to share in his uncle's greatness.

<sup>30</sup> The marriage of his nephew Nicolo della Rovere to Laura, the daughter of Alexander VI. by Giulia Bella, in 1505, long after the Borgia family had lost its hold on Italy, is a curious and unexplained incident.



exhibiting on every flag and balcony the Bull of the house of Borgia, and crying like the Egyptians when they found Apis:—

Vive diu Bos! Vive diu Bos! Borgia vive!  
Vivit Alexander: Roma beata manet.

In truth there was nothing to convince the Romans of the coming woe, or to raise suspicion that a Pope had been elected who would deserve the execration of succeeding centuries. In Roderigo Borgia the people only saw, as yet, a man accomplished at all points, of handsome person, royal carriage, majestic presence, affable address. He was a brilliant orator, a passionate lover, a demigod of court pageantry and ecclesiastic parade—qualities which, though they do not suit our notions of a churchman, imposed upon the taste of the Renaissance. As he rode in triumph toward the Lateran, voices were loud in his praise. 'He sits upon a snow-white horse,' writes one of the humanists of the century,<sup>31</sup> 'with serene forehead, with commanding dignity. As he distributes his blessing to the crowd, all eyes are fixed upon him, and all hearts rejoice. How admirable is the mild composure of his mien! how noble his countenance! his glance how free! His stature and carriage, his beauty and the full health of his body, how they enhance the reverence which he inspires!' Another panegyrist<sup>32</sup> describes his 'broad forehead, kingly brow, free countenance full of majesty,' adding that 'the heroic beauty of his whole body' was given him by nature in order that he might 'adorn the seat of the Apostles with his divine form in the place of God.' How little in the early days of his Pontificate the Borgia resembled that Alexander with whom the legend of his subsequent life has familiarised our fancy, may be gathered from the following account:<sup>33</sup> 'He is handsome, of a most glad countenance and joyous aspect, gifted with honeyed and choice eloquence; the beautiful women on whom his eyes are cast he lures to love him, and moves them in a wondrous way, more powerfully than the magnet influences iron.' These, we must remember, are the testimonies of men of letters, imbued with the Pagan sentiments of the fifteenth century, and rejoicing in the advent of a Pope who would, they hoped, make Rome the capital of luxury and license. Therefore they require to be received with caution. Yet there is no reason to suppose that the majority of the Italians regarded the elevation of the Borgia with peculiar horror. As a Cardinal he had given proof of his ability, but shown no signs of force or cruelty or fraud. Nor were his morals worse than those of his colleagues. If he was the father of several children, so was Giuliano della Rovere, and so had been Pope Innocent before him. This mattered but little in an age when the Primate of Christendom had come to be regarded as a secular potentate, less fortunate than other princes inasmuch as his rule was not

<sup>31</sup> See Michael Fernus, quoted by Greg. *Lucrezia Borgia*, p. 45.

<sup>32</sup> Jason Mainus, quoted by Greg. *Stadl Rom*, p. 314, note.

<sup>33</sup> Casp. Ver., quoted by Greg. *Stadl Rom*, p. 208, note.

hereditary, but more fortunate in so far as he could wield the thunders and dispense the privileges of the Church. A few men of discernment knew what had been done, and shuddered. 'The King of Naples,' says Guicciardini, 'though he dissembled his grief, told the queen, his wife, with tears—tears which he was wont to check even at the death of his own sons—that a Pope had been made who would prove most pestilent to the whole Christian commonwealth.' The young Cardinal Giovanni de' Medici, again, showed his discernment of the situation by whispering in the Conclave to his kinsman Cibo: 'We are in the wolf's jaws; he will gulp us down, unless we make our flight good.' Besides, there was in Italy a widely spread repugnance to the Spanish intruders—Marrani, or renegade Moors, as they were popularly called—who crowded the Vatican and threatened to possess the land of their adoption like conquerors. 'Ten Papacies would not suffice to satiate the greed of all this kindred,' wrote Giannandrea Boccaccio to the Duke of Ferrar in 1492: and events proved that these apprehensions were justified; for during the Pontificate of Alexander eighteen Spanish Cardinals were created, five of whom belonged to the house of the Borgias.

It is certain, however, that the profound horror with which the name of Alexander VI. strikes a modern ear was not felt among the Italians at the time of his election. The sentiment of hatred with which he was afterwards regarded arose partly from the crimes by which his Pontificate was rendered infamous, partly from the fear which his son Cesare inspired, and partly from the mysteries of his private life, which revolted even the corrupt conscience of the sixteenth century. This sentiment of hatred had grown to universal execration at the date of his death. In course of time, when the attention of the Northern nations had been directed to the iniquities of Rome, and when the glaring discrepancy between Alexander's pretension as a Pope and his conduct as a man had been apprehended, it inspired a legend which, like all legends, distorts the facts which it reflects.

Alexander was, in truth, a man eminently fitted to close an old age and to inaugurate a new, to demonstrate the paradoxical situation of the Popes by the inexorable logic of his practical impiety, and to fuse two conflicting world-forces in the cynicism of supreme corruption. The Emperors of the Julian house had exhibited the extreme of sensual insolence in their autocracy. What they desired of strange and sweet and terrible in the forbidden fruits of lust, they had enjoyed. The Popes of the Middle Ages—Hildebrand and Boniface—had displayed the extreme of spiritual insolence in their theocracy. What they desired of tyrannous and forceful in the exercise of an usurped despotism over souls, they had enjoyed. The Borgia combined both impulses toward the illimitable. To describe him as the Genius of Evil, whose sensualities, as unrestrained as Nero's, were relieved against the background of flame and smoke which Christianity had raised for fleshly sins, is justifiable. His spiritual tyranny, that arrogated Jus, by right of which he claimed the hemisphere revealed by Christopher Columbus, and im-

posed upon the press of Europe the censure of the Church of Rome, was rendered ten times more monstrous by the glare reflected on it from the unquenched furnace of a godless life. The universal conscience of Christianity is revolted by those unnameable delights, orgies of blood and festivals of lust, which were enjoyed in the plenitude of his green and vigorous old age by this versatile diplomatist and subtle priest, who controlled the councils of kings, and who chaunted the sacramental service for a listening world on Easter Day in Rome. Rome has never been small or weak or mediocre. And now in the Pontificate of Alexander 'that memorable scene' presented to the nations of the modern world a pageant of Antichrist and Antiphysis—the negation of the Gospel and of nature; a glaring spectacle of discord between humanity as it aspires to be at its best, and humanity as it is at its worst; a tragi-comedy composed by some infernal Aristophanes, in which the servant of servants, the anointed of the Lord, the lieutenant upon earth of Christ, played the chief part. It may be objected that this is the language not of history but of the legend. I reply that there are occasions when the legend has caught the spirit of the truth.

Alexander was a stronger and a firmer man than his immediate predecessors. 'He combined,' says Guicciardini, 'craft with singular sagacity, a sound judgment with extraordinary powers of persuasion; and to all the grave affairs of life he applied ability and pains beyond belief.'<sup>34</sup> His first care was to reduce Rome to order. The old factions of Colonna and Orsini, which Sixtus had scotched, but which had raised their heads again during the dotage of Innocent, were destroyed in his Pontificate. In this way, as Machiavelli observed,<sup>35</sup> he laid the real basis for the temporal power of the Papacy. Alexander, indeed, as a sovereign, achieved for the Papal See what Louis XI. had done for the throne of France, and made Rome on its small scale follow the type of the large European monarchies. The faithlessness and perjuries of the Pope, 'who never did aught else but deceive, nor ever thought of anything but this, and always found occasion for his frauds,'<sup>36</sup> when combined with his logical intellect and persuasive eloquence, made him a redoubtable antagonist. All considerations of religion and morality were subordinated by him with strict impartiality to policy: and his

<sup>34</sup> It is but fair to Guicciardini to complete his sentence in a note: 'These good qualities were far surpassed by his vices; private habits of the utmost obscenity, no shame nor sense of truth, no fidelity to his engagements, no religious sentiment; insatiable avarice, unbridled ambition, cruelty beyond the cruelty of barbarous races, burning desire to elevate his sons by any means: of these there were many, and among them—in order that he might not lack vicious instruments for effecting his vicious schemes—one not less detestable in any way than his father.' *St. D' It.* vol. i. p. 9. I shall translate and put into the appendix Guicciardini's character of Alexander from the *Storia di Firenze*.

<sup>35</sup> In the sentences which close the 11th chapter of the *Prince*.

<sup>36</sup> Mach. *Prince*, ch. xvii. In the satires of Ariosto (*Satire* i. 208-27) there is a brilliant and singularly outspoken passage on the nepotism of the Popes and its ruinous results for Italy.

policy he restrained to two objects—the advancement of his family, and the consolidation of the temporal power. These were narrow aims for the ambition of a potentate who with one stroke of his pen pretended to confer the new-found world on Spain. Yet they taxed his whole strength, and drove him to the perpetration of enormous crimes.

Former Pontiffs had raised money by the sale of benefices and indulgences: this, of course, Alexander also practised—to such an extent, indeed, that an epigram gained currency: ‘Alexander sells the keys, the altars, Christ. Well, he bought them; so he has a right to sell them.’ But he went further and took lessons from Tiberius. Having sold the scarlet to the highest bidder, he used to feed his prelate with rich benefices. When he had fattened him sufficiently, he poisoned him, laid hands upon his hoards, and recommenced the game. Paolo Capello, the Venetian ambassador, wrote in the year 1500: ‘Every night they find in Rome four or five murdered men, Bishops and Prelates and so forth.’ Panvinius mentions three Cardinals who were known to have been poisoned by the Pope; and to their names may be added those of the Cardinals of Capua and of Verona.<sup>37</sup> To be a prince of the Church was dangerous in those days; and if the Borgia had not at last poisoned himself by mistake, he must in the long run have had to pay people to accept so perilous a privilege. His traffic in Church dignities was carried on upon a grand scale: twelve Cardinals’ hats, for example, were put up to auction in single day in 1500.<sup>38</sup> This was when he wished to pack the Conclave with votes in favour of the cession of Romagna to Cesare Borgia, as well as to replenish his exhausted coffers. Forty-three Cardinals were created by him in eleven promotions: each of these was worth on an average 10,000 florins; while the price paid by Francesco Soderini amounted to 20,000, and that paid by Domenico Grimmani reached the sum of 30,000.

Former Popes had preached crusades against the Turk, languidly or energetically according as the coasts of Italy were threatened. Alexander frequently invited Bajazet to enter Europe and relieve him of the princes who opposed his intrigues in the favour of his children. The fraternal feeling which subsisted between the Pope and the Sultan was to some extent dependent on the fate of Prince Djem, a brother of Bajazet and son of the conqueror of Constantinople, who had fled for protection to the Christian powers, and whom the Pope kept prisoner, receiving 40,000 ducats yearly from the Porte for his jail fee. Innocent VIII. had been the first to snare this lucrative guest in 1489. The Lance of Longinus was sent him as a token of the Sultan’s gratitude, and Innocent, who built an altar for the relique, caused his own tomb to be raised closed close by. His effigy in bronze by Pollajuolo still carries in its hand this blood-gift from the infidel to the High Priest of Christendom. Djem meanwhile remained in Rome, and held his

<sup>37</sup> See the authorities in Burckhardt, pp. 93, 94.

<sup>38</sup> Guicc. *St. d’ It.* vol. iii. p. 15.

Moslem Court side by side with the Pontiff in the Vatican. Despatches are extant in which Alexander and Bajazet exchange terms of the warmest friendship, the Turk imploring his Greatness—so he addressed the Pope—to put an end to the unlucky Djem, and promising as the price of this assassination a sum of 300,000 ducats and the tunic worn by Christ, presumably that very seamless coat over which the soldiers of Calvary had cast their dice.<sup>39</sup> The money and the relique arrived in Italy and were intercepted by the partisans of Giuliano della Rovere. Alexander, before the bargain with the Sultan had been concluded by the murder of Djem, was forced to hand him over to the French king. But the unlucky Turk carried in his constitution the slow poison of the Borgias, and died in Charles's camp between Rome and Naples. Whatever crimes may be condoned in Alexander, it is difficult to extenuate this traffic with the Turks. By his appeal from the powers of Europe to the Sultan, at a time when the peril to the Western world was still most serious, he stands attainted for high treason against Christendom, of which he professed to be the chief; against civilisation, which the Church pretended to protect; against Christ, whose vicar he presumed to style himself.

Like Sixtus, Alexander combined this deadness to the spirit and the interests of Christianity with zeal for dogma. He never flinched in formal orthodoxy, and the measures which he took for riveting the chains of superstition on the people were calculated with the military firmness of a Napoleon. It was he who established the censure of the press, by which printers were obliged, under pain of excommunication, to submit the books they issued to the control of the Archbishops and their delegates. The Brief of June 1, 1501, which contains this order, may be reasonably said to have retarded civilisation, at least in Italy and Spain.

Carnal sensuality was the besetting vice of this Pope throughout his life.<sup>40</sup> This, together with his almost insane weakness for his children, whereby he became a slave to the terrible Cesare, caused all the crimes which he committed. At the same time, though sensual, Alexander was not gluttonous. Boccaccio, the Ferrarese Ambassador, remarks: 'The Pope eats only of one dish. It is, therefore, disagreeable to

<sup>39</sup> See the letters in the 'Preuves et Observations,' printed at the end of the *Memoires de Comines*.

<sup>40</sup> Guicciardini (*St. Fior.* cap. 27) writes: 'Fu lussoriosissimo nell' uno e nell' altro sesso, tenendo pubblicamente femine e garzoni, ma più ancora nelle femine.' A notion of the public disorders connected with his dissolute life may be gained from this passage in Sanudo's Diary (Gregorovius, *Lucrezia Borgia*, p. 88): 'Da Roma per le lettere del orator nostro se intese et etiam de private persone cossa assai abominevole in le chiesa di Dio, che al papa erra nato un fiolo di una dona romana maritata, ch' el padre l' havea rufanata, e di questa il marito invitò il suocero a la vigna e lo uccise tagliandoli el capo, ponendo quello sopra uno legno con letere che diceva questo e il capo de mio suocero che a rufanato sua fiola al papa, et che inteso questo il papa fece metter el dito in exilio di Roma con taglia. Questa nova venne per lettere particular; etiam si godea con la sua spagnola menatali per suo fiol duca di Gandia novamente li venuto.'

have to dine with him.' In this respect he may be favourably contrasted with the Roman prelates of the age of Leo. His relations to Vannozza Catanei, the titular wife first of Giorgio de Croce, and then of Carlo Canale, and to Giulia Farnese,<sup>41</sup> surnamed *La Bella*, the titular wife of Orsino Orsini, were open and acknowledged. These two sultanas ruled him during the greater portion of his career, conniving meanwhile at the harem, which, after truly Oriental fashion, he maintained in the Vatican. An incident which happened during the French invasion of 1494 brings the domestic circumstances of a Pope of the Renaissance vividly before us. Monseigneur d'Allegre caught the ladies Giulia and Girolama Farnese, together with the lady Adriana de Mila, who was employed as their duenna, near Capodimonte, on November 29, and carried them to Montefiascone. The sum fixed for their ransom was 3,000 ducats. This the Pope paid, and on December 1 they were released. Alexander met them outside Rome, attired like a layman in a black jerkin trimmed with gold brocade, and fastened round his waist by a Spanish girdle, from which hung his dagger. Lodovico Sforza, when he heard what had happened, remarked that it was weak to release these ladies, who were 'the very eyes and heart' of his Holiness, for so small a ransom—if 50,000 ducats had been demanded, they would have been paid. This and a few similar jokes, uttered at the Pope's expense, make us understand to what extent the Italians were accustomed to regard their high priest as a secular prince. Even the pageant of Alexander seated in S. Peter's, with his daughter Lucrezia on one side of his throne and his daughter-in-law Sancia upon the other, moved no moral indignation; nor were the Romans astonished when Lucrezia was appointed Governor of Spoleto, and plenipotentiary Regent of the Vatican in her father's absence. These scandals, however, created a very different impression in the north, and prepared the way for the Reformation.

The nepotism of Sixtus was like water to the strong wine of Alexander's paternal ambition. The passion of paternity, exaggerated beyond the bounds of natural affection, and scandalous in a Roman Pontiff, was the main motive of the Borgia's action. Of his children by Vannozza, he caused the eldest son to be created Duke of Gandia; the youngest he married to Donna Sancia, a daughter of Alfonso of Aragon, by whom the boy was honoured with the Dukedom of Squillace. Cesare, the second of this family, was appointed Bishop of Valentia, and Cardinal. The Dukedoms of Camerino and Nepi were given to another John, whom Alexander first declared to be his grandson through Cesare, and afterwards acknowledged as his son. This John may possibly have been Lucrezia's child. The Dukedom of Sermoneta, wrenched for a

<sup>41</sup> Her brother Alexander, afterwards Paul III., owed his promotion to the purple to this liaison, which was, therefore, the origin of the greatness of the Farnesi. The tomb of Paul III. in the Tribune of S. Peter's has three notable family portraits—the Pope himself in bronze; his sister Giulia, naked in marble, as Justice, and their old mother, Giovanna Gaetani, the bawd, as Prudence.

moment from the hands of the Gaetani family, who still own it, was conferred upon Lucrezia's son, Roderigo. Lucrezia, the only daughter of Alexander by Vannozza, took three husbands in succession, after having been formally betrothed to two Spanish nobles, Don Cherubino Juan de Centelles, and Don Gasparo da Procida, son of the Count of Aversa. These contracts, made before her father became Pope, were annulled as not magnificent enough for the Pontiff's daughter. In 1492 she was married to Giovanni Sforza, Lord of Pesaro. But in 1497 the pretensions of the Borgias had outgrown this alliance, and their public policy was inclining to relations with the Southern Courts of Italy. Accordingly she was divorced and given to Alfonso, Prince of Biseglia, a natural son of the King of Naples. When this man's father lost his crown, the Borgias, not caring to be connected with an ex-royal family, caused Alfonso to be stabbed on the steps of S. Peter's in 1501; and while he lingered between life and death, they had him strangled in his sick-bed, by Michellozzo, Cesare's assassin in chief. Finally Lucrezia was wedded to Alfonso, crown-prince of Ferrara, in 1502.<sup>42</sup> The proud heir of the Este Dynasty was forced by policy, against his inclination, to take to his board and bed a Pope's bastard, twice divorced, once severed from her husband by murder, and soiled, whether justly or not, by atrocious rumours, to which her father's and her brother's conduct gave but too much colour. She proved a model princess after all, and died at last in childbirth, after having been praised by Ariosto as a second Lucrece, brighter for her virtues than the star of regal Rome.

History has at last done justice to the memory of this woman, whose long yellow hair was so beautiful, and whose character was so colourless. The legend which made her a poison-brewing Mænad has been proved a lie—but only at the expense of the whole society in which she lived. The simple northern folk, familiar with the tales of Chriemhild, Brynhild, and Gudrun, who helped to forge this legend, could not understand that a woman should be irresponsible for all the crimes and scandals perpetrated in her name. Yet it seems now clear enough that not hers, but her father's and her brother's, were the atrocities which made her married life in Rome a byword. She sat and smiled through all the tempests which tossed her to and fro, until she found at last a fair port in the Duchy of Ferrara. Nursed in the corruption of Papal Rome, which Lorenzo de' Medici described to his son Giovanni as 'a sink of all the vices,' consorting habitually with her father's concubines, and conscious that her own mother had been married for show to two successive husbands, it is not possible that Lucrezia ruled her conduct at any time with propriety. It is even probable that the darkest tales about her are true. The Lord of Pesaro, we must remember, told his kinsman, the Duke of Milan, that the assigned reasons for his divorce

<sup>42</sup> Her dowry was 300,000 ducats, besides wedding presents, and certain important immunities and privileges granted to Ferrara by the Pope.



were false, and that the fact was what can scarcely be recorded.<sup>43</sup> Still, there is no ground for supposing that, in the matter of her first husband's divorce and the second's murder, she was more than a passive agent in the hands of Alexander and Cesare. The pleasure-loving, careless woman of the Renaissance is very different from the Medea of Victor Hugo's romance; and what remains most revolting to the modern conscience in her conduct is complacent acquiescence in scenes of debauchery devised for her amusement.<sup>44</sup> Instead of viewing her with dread as a potent and malignant witch, we have to regard her with contempt as a feeble woman, soiled with sensual foulness from the cradle. It is also due to truth to remember that at Ferrara she won the esteem of a husband who had married her unwillingly, attached the whole state to her by her sweetness of temper, and received the panegyrics of the two Strozzi, Bembo, Ariosto, Aldo Manuzio, and many other men of note. Foreigners who saw her surrounded by her brilliant Court exclaimed, like the French biographer of Bayard: 'J'ose bien dire que, de son temps, ni beaucoup avant, il ne s'est point trouvé de plus triomphante princesse; car elle était belle, bonne, douce, et courtoise à toutes gens.'

Yet even at Ferrara tragedies which might remind her of the Vatican continued to surround her path. Alfonso, rude in manners and devoted to gun-foundry, interfered but little with the life she led among the wits and scholars who surrounded her. One day, however, in 1508, the poet Ercole Strozzi, who had sung her praises, was found dead, wrapped in his mantle, and pierced with two and twenty wounds. No judicial inquiry into this murder was made. Rumour credited both Alfonso and Lucrezia with the deed—Alfonso, because he might be jealous of his wife; Lucrezia, because her poet had recently married Barbara Torelli. Two years earlier another dark crime at Ferrara brought the name of Borgia before the public. One of Lucrezia's ladies, Angela Borgia, was courted by both Giulio d' Este and the Cardinal Ippolito. The girl praised the eyes of Giulio in the hearing of the Cardinal, who

<sup>43</sup> The whole question of Lucrezia's guilt has been ably investigated by Gregorovius (*Lucrezia Borgia*, pp. 101, 159-64). Charity suggests that the dreadful tradition of her relation to her father and brothers is founded less upon fact than upon the scandals current after her divorce. What Giovanni Sforza said was this: '*anzi haverla conosciuta infinite volte, ma chel Papa non gelha tolta per altro se non per usare con lei.*' This confession of the injured husband went the round of all the Courts of Italy, was repeated by Malpiero and Paolo Capello, formed the substance of the satires of Sannazaro and Pontano, crept into the chronicle of Matarazzo, and survived in the histories of Machiavelli and Guicciardini. There was nothing in his words to astonish men who were cognisant of the acts of Gianpaolo Baglioni and Sigismondo Malatesta; while the frantic passion of Alexander for his children, closely allied as this feeling was in him to excessive sensuality, gave them confirmation. Were they, however, true; or were they a malevolent lie? That is the real point at issue. Psychological speculation will help but little here. It is true that Lucrezia in after-life showed all the signs of a clear conscience. But so also did Alexander, whose buoyancy of spirits lasted till the very day of his death. Yet he was stained with crimes foul enough to darken the conscience of any man, at any period of life, and in any position.

<sup>44</sup> See Burchard, ed Liebnitz, pp. 77 and 78.

forthwith hired assassins to mutilate his brother's face. Giulio escaped from their hands with the loss of one of his eyes, and sought justice from the Duke against the Cardinal in vain. Thereupon he vowed to be revenged on both Ippolito and Alfonso. His plot was to murder them, and to place Ferdinand of Este on the throne. The treason was discovered; the conspirators appeared before Alfonso: he rushed upon Ferdinand, and with his dagger stabbed him in the face. Both Giulio and Ferdinand were thrown into the dungeons of the palace at Ferrara, where they languished for years, while the Duke and Lucrezia enjoyed themselves in its spacious halls and sunny loggie among their courtiers. Ferdinand died in prison, aged sixty-three, in 1540. Giulio was released in 1559 and died, aged eighty-three, in 1561. These facts deserve to be recorded in connection with Lucrezia's married life at Ferrara, lest we should pay too much attention to the flatteries of Ariosto. At the same time her history as Duchess consists, for the most part, in the record of the birth of children. Like her mother Vannozza, she gave herself, in the decline of life, to works of charity and mercy. After this fashion the bright and baleful dames of the Renaissance saved their souls.

But to return to the domestic history of Alexander. The murder of the Duke of Gandia brings the whole Borgia family upon the scene. It is related with great circumstantiality and with surprising sangfroid by Burchard, the Pope's Master of the Ceremonies. The Duke with his brother Cesare, then Cardinal Valentino, supped one night at the house of their mother Vannozza. On their way home the Duke said that he should visit a lady of their acquaintance. He parted from Cesare and was never seen again alive. When the news of his disappearance spread abroad, a boatman of the Tiber deposed to having watched the body of a man thrown into the river on the night of the Duke's death, the 14th of June; he had not thought it worth while to report this fact, for he had seen 'a hundred bodies in his day thrown into the water at the said spot, and no questions asked about them afterwards.' The Pope had the Tiber dragged for some hours, while the wits of Rome made epigrams upon this true successor of S. Peter, this new fisher of men. At last the body of the Duke of Gandia was hauled up: nine wounds, one in the throat, the others in the head and legs and trunk, were found upon the corpse. From the evidence accumulated on the subject of the murder it appeared that Cesare had planned it; whether, as some have supposed, out of a jealousy of his brother too dreadful to describe, or, as is more probable, because he wished to take the first place in the Borgia family, we do not know exactly. The Pontiff in his rage and grief was like a wild beast driven to bay. He shut himself up in a private room, refused food, and howled with so terrible a voice that it was heard in the streets beyond his palace. When he rose up from this agony, remorse seemed to have struck him. He assembled a Conclave of the Cardinals, wept before them, rent his robes, confessed his sins, and instituted a commission for the reform of the abuses he had sanc-

tioned in the Church. But the storm of anguish spent its strength at last. A visit from Vannozza, the mother of his children, wrought a sudden change from fury to reconciliation. What passed between them is not known for certain; Vannozza is supposed, however, to have pointed out, what was indisputably true, that Cesare was more fitted to support the dignity of the family by his abilities than had been the weak and amiable Duke of Gandia. The miserable father rose from the earth, dried his eyes, took food, put from him his remorse, and forgot together with his grief for Absalom the reforms which he had promised for the Church.

Henceforth he devoted himself with sustained energy to building up the fortunes of Cesare, whom he released from all ecclesiastical obligations, and to whose service he seemed bound by some mysterious power. Nor did he even resent the savageness and cruelty which this young hell-cat vented in his presence on the persons of his favourites. At one time Cesare stabbed Perotto, the Pope's minion, with his own hand, when the youth had taken refuge in Alexander's arms; the blood spurted out upon the priestly mantle, and the young man died there.<sup>45</sup> At another time he employed the same diabolical temper for the delectation of his father. He turned out some prisoners sentenced to death in a courtyard of the palace, arrayed himself in fantastic clothes, and amused the papal party by shooting the unlucky criminals. They ran round and round the court crouching and doubling to avoid his arrows. He showed his skill by hitting each where he thought fit. The Pope and Lucrezia looked on applaudingly. Other scenes, not of bloodshed, but of grovelling sensuality, devised for the entertainment of his father and his sister, though described by the dry pen of Burchard, can scarcely be transferred to these pages.

The history of Cesare's attempt to found a principality belongs properly to another chapter.<sup>46</sup> But the assistance rendered by his father is essential to the biography of Alexander. The vision of an Italian sovereignty which Charles of Anjou, Gian Galeazzo Visconti, and Galeazzo Maria Sforza had successively entertained, now fascinated the imagination of the Borgias. Having resolved to make Cesare a prince, Alexander allied himself with Louis XII. of France, promising to annul his first marriage and to sanction his nuptials with Anne of Brittany, if he would undertake the advancement of his son. This bribe induced Louis to create Cesare Duke of Valence and to confer on him the hand of Charlotte of Navarre. He also entered Italy and with his arms enabled Cesare to subdue Romagna. The system adopted by Alexander and his son in their conquests was a simple one. They took the capitals and murdered the princes. Thus Cesare strangled the Varani at Camerino in 1502, and the Vitelli and Orsini at Sinigaglia in the same year: by his means the Marescotti had been massacred wholesale in

<sup>45</sup> The account is given by Capello, the Venetian envoy.

<sup>46</sup> See Chapter VI.

Bologna; Pesaro, Rimini, and Forlì had been treated in like manner; and after the capture of Faenza in 1501, the two young Manfredi had been sent to Rome, where they were exposed to the worst insults, and then drowned or strangled.<sup>47</sup> A system of equal simplicity kept their policy alive in foreign Courts. The Bishop of Cete in France was poisoned for hinting at a secret of Cesare's (1498); the Cardinal d'Amboise was bribed to maintain the credit of the Borgias with Louis XII.; the offer of a red hat to Briçonnet saved Alexander from a general council in 1494. The historical interest of Alexander's method consists of its deliberate adaptation of all the means in his power to one end—the elevation of his family. His spiritual authority, the wealth of the Church, the honours of the Holy College, the arts of an assassin, the diplomacy of a despot, were all devoted systematically and openly to the purpose in view. Whatever could be done to weaken Italy by foreign invasions and internal discords, so as to render it a prey for his poisonous son, he attempted. When Louis XII. made his infamous alliance with Ferdinand the Catholic for the spoliation of the house of Aragon in Naples, the Pope gladly gave it his sanction. The two kings quarrelled over their prey: then Alexander fomented their discord in order that Cesare might have an opportunity of carrying on his operations in Tuscany unchecked. Patriotism in his breast, whether the patriotism of a born Spaniard or the patriotism of an Italian potentate, was as dead as Christianity. To make profit for the house of Borgia by fraud, sacrilege, and the dismemberment of nations, was the Papal policy.

It is wearisome to continue to the end the catalogue of his misdoings. We are relieved when at last the final crash arrives. The two Borgias, so runs the legend of their downfall, invited themselves to dine with the Cardinal Adriano of Corneto in a vineyard of the Vatican belonging to their host. Thither by the hands of Alexander's butler they previously conveyed some poisoned wine. By mistake, or by the contrivance of the Cardinal, who may have bribed this trusted agent, they drank the death-cup mingled for their victim. Nearly all contemporary Italian annalists, including Guicciardini, Paolo Giovo, and Sanudo, gave currency to this version of the tragedy, which became the common property of historians, novelists, and moralists.<sup>48</sup> Yet Burchard, who

<sup>47</sup> Their father, Galeotto Manfredi, had been murdered in 1488 by their mother, Francesca Bentivogli. Of Astorre's death Guicciardini writes: 'Astorre, che era minore di diciotto anni e di forma eccellente . . . condotto a Roma, saziata prima (secondo che si disse) la libidine di qualcuno, fu occultamente insieme con un suo fratello naturale privato della vita.' Nardi (*Storie Fiorentine*, lib. iv. 13) credits Cesare with the violation and murder of the boy. How far, we may ask, were these dark crimes of violence actuated by astrological superstition? This question is raised by Burckhardt (p. 363) apropos of Sigismondo Malatesta's assault upon his son, and Pier Luigi Farnese's violation of the Bishop of Fano. To a temperament like Alexander's, however, mere lust enhanced by cruelty, and seasoned with the joy of insult to an enemy, was a sufficient motive for the commission of monstrous crime.

<sup>48</sup> The story is related by Cinthio in his *Ecatommithi*, Dec. 9, Nov. 10.

was on the spot, recorded in his diary that both father and son were attacked by a malignant fever; and Giustiniani wrote to his masters in Venice that the Pope's physician ascribed his illness to apoplexy.<sup>49</sup> The season was remarkably unhealthy, and deaths from fever had been frequent. A circular letter to the German Princes, written probably by the Cardinal of Gurk, and dated August 31, 1503, distinctly mentioned fever as the cause of the Pope's sudden decease, *ex hoc seculo horrendâ febrium incensione absorptum*.<sup>50</sup> Machiavelli, again, who conversed with Cesare Borgia about this turning-point in his career, gave no hint of poison, but spoke only of son and father being simultaneously prostrated by disease.

At this distance of time, and without further details of evidence, we are unable to decide whether Alexander's death was natural, or whether the singularly circumstantial and commonly accepted story of the poisoned wine contained the truth. On the one side, in favour of the hypothesis of fever, we have Burchard's testimony, which does not, however, exactly agree with Giustiniani's, who reported apoplexy to the Venetian Senate as the cause of death, and whose report, even at Venice, was rejected by Sanudo for the hypothesis of poison. On the other side, we have the consent of all contemporary historians, with the single and, it must be allowed, remarkable exception of Machiavelli. Paolo Giovio goes even so far as to assert that the Cardinal Corneto told him he had narrowly escaped from the effects of antidotes taken in his extreme terror to counteract the possibility of poison.

Whatever may be the proximate cause of his sickness, Alexander died, a black and swollen mass, hideous to contemplate, after a sharp struggle with the venom he had absorbed.<sup>51</sup> 'All Rome,' says Guicciardini, 'ran with indescribable gladness to view the corpse. Men could not satiate their eyes with feeding on the carcase of the serpent who, by his unbounded ambition and pestiferous perfidy, by every demonstration of horrible cruelty, monstrous lust, and unheard-of avarice, selling without distinction things sacred and profane, had filled the world with venom.' Cesare languished for some days on a sick bed: but in the end, by the aid of a powerful constitution, he recovered, to find his claws cut and his plans in irretrievable confusion. 'The state of the Duke of Valence,' says Filippo Nerli,<sup>52</sup> 'vanished even as smoke in air, or foam upon the water.'

The moral sense of the Italians expressed itself after Alexander's

<sup>49</sup> The various accounts of Alexander's death have been epitomised by Gregorovius (*Stadt Rom*, vol. vii.), and have been discussed by Villari in his edition of the Giustiniani Despatches, 2 vols. Florence, Le Monnier. Gregorovius thinks the question still open. Villari decides in favour of fever against poison.

<sup>50</sup> Reprinted by R. Garnett in *Athenæum*, Jan. 16, 1875.

<sup>51</sup> 'Morto chel fu, il corpo cominciò a bollire, e la bocca a spumare come faria uno caldaro al focho, assì perseverò mentre che fu sopra terra; divenne anchor ultra modo grosso in tanto che in lui non appareva forma di corpo humano, ne dala larghezza ala lunghezza del corpo suo era differenza alcuna' (letter of Marquis of Mantua).

<sup>52</sup> *Commentari*, liv. v.

death in the legend of a devil, who had carried off his soul. Burchard, Giustiniani, Sanudo, and others mention this incident with apparent belief. But a letter from the Marquis of Mantua to his wife, dated September 22, 1503, gives the fullest particulars: 'in his sickness the Pope talked in such a way that those who did not know what was in his mind thought him wandering, though he spoke with great feeling, and his words were: *I will come; it is but right; wait yet a little while.* Those who were privy to his secret thought explained that, after the death of Innocent, while the Conclave was sitting, he bargained with the devil for the Papacy at the price of his soul: and among the agreements was this, that he should hold the See twelve years, which he did, with the addition of four days; and some attest they saw seven devils in the room at the moment that he breathed his last.' Mere old wives' tales; yet they mark the point to which the credit of the Borgia had fallen, even in Italy, since the hour when the humanists had praised his godlike carriage and heroic mien upon the day of his election.

Thus, overreaching themselves, ended this pair of villains—the most notable adventurers who ever played their part upon the stage of the great world. The fruit of so many crimes and such persistent effort was reaped by their enemy, Giuliano della Rovere, for whose benefit the nobles of the Roman state and the despots of Romagna had been extirpated.<sup>53</sup> Alexander had proved the old order of Catholicity to be untenable. The Reformation was imperiously demanded. His very vices spurred the spirit of humanity to freedom. Before a saintly Pontiff the new age might still have trembled in superstitious reverence. The Borgia to all logical intellects rendered the pretensions of a Pope to sway the souls of men ridiculous. This is an excuse for dwelling so long upon the spectacle of his enormities. Better than any other series of facts, they illustrate not only the corruption of society, and the separation between morality and religion in Italy, but also the absurdity of that Church policy which in the age of the Renaissance confined the action of the head of Christendom to the narrow interests of a brood of parvenus and bastards.

Of Pius III., who reigned for a few days after Alexander, no account need be taken. Giuliano della Rovere was made Pope in 1503. Whatever opinion may be formed of him considered as the high-priest of the Christian faith, there can be no doubt that Julius II. was one of the greatest figures of the Renaissance, and that his name, instead of that of Leo X., should by right be given to the golden age of letters and of arts in Rome. He stamped the century with the impress of a powerful personality. It is to him we owe the most splendid of Michael Angelo's and Raphael's masterpieces. The Basilica of S. Peter's, that materialised idea, which remains to symbolise the transition from the Church of the Middle Ages to the modern semi-secular supremacy of Papal Rome,

<sup>53</sup> Cesare, it must be remembered, had ostensibly reduced the cities of Lombardy, Romagna, and the March, as Gonfalonier of the Church.

was his thought. No nepotism, no loathsome sensuality, no flagrant violation of ecclesiastical justice, stain his pontificate. His one purpose was to secure and extend the temporal authority of the Popes; and this he achieved by curbing the ambition of the Venetians, who threatened to absorb Romagna, by reducing Perugia and Bologna to the Papal sway, by annexing Parma and Piacenza, and by entering on the heritage bequeathed to him by Cesare Borgia. At his death he transmitted to his successors the largest and most solid sovereignty in Italy. But restless, turbid, never happy unless fighting Julius drowned the peninsula in blood. He has been called a patriot, because from time to time he raised the cry of driving the barbarians from Italy: it must, however, be remembered that it was he, while still Cardinal di San Pietro in Vinvoli, who finally moved Charles VIII. from Lyons; it was he who stirred up the League of Cambray against Venice, and who invited the Swiss mercenaries into Lombardy; in each case adding the weight of the Papal authority to the forces which were enslaving his country. Julius, again, has been variously represented as the saviour of the Papacy and as the curse of Italy.<sup>54</sup> He was emphatically both. In those days of national anarchy it was perhaps impossible for Julius to magnify the Church except at the expense of the nation, and to achieve the purpose of his life without inflicting the scourge of foreign war upon his countrymen. The powers of Europe had outgrown the Papal discipline. Italian questions were being decided in the cabinets of Louis, Maximilian, and Ferdinand. Instead of controlling the arbiters of Italy, a Pope could only play off one against another.

Leo X. succeeded Julius in 1513, to the great relief of the Romans, wearied with the continual warfare of the old *Pontifice terribile*. In the gorgeous pageant of his triumphal procession to the Lateran, the streets were decked with arches, emblems, and inscriptions. Among these may be noticed the couplet emblazoned by the banker Agostino Chigi before his palace:

Olim habuit Cypris sua tempora; tempora Mavors  
Olim habuit; sua nunc tempora Pallas habet,

'Venus ruled here with Alexander; Mars with Julius; now Pallas enters on her reign with Leo.' To this epigram the goldsmith Antonio di San Marco answered with one pithy line:

Mars fuit; est Pallas; Cypria semper ero:

'Mars reigned: Pallas reigns; Venus' own I shall always be.'

This first Pope of the house of Medici enjoyed at Rome the fame of his father Lorenzo the Magnificent at Florence. Extolled as an Augustus in his lifetime, he has given his name to what is called the golden age of Italian culture. As a man, he was well qualified to repre-

<sup>54</sup> 'Fatale instrumento e allora e prima e poi de' mali d' Italia,' says Guicciardini, *Storia d' Italia*, vol. i. p. 84. 'Der Retter des Papstthums,' says Burckhardt, p. 95.



sent the neo-pagan freedom of the Renaissance. Saturated with the spirit of his period, he had no sympathy with religious earnestness, no conception of moral elevation, no aim beyond a superficial polish of the understanding and the taste. Good Latinity seemed to him of more importance than true doctrine: Jupiter sounded better in a sermon than Jehovah: the immortality of the soul was an open topic for debate. At the same time he was extravagantly munificent to men of culture, and hearty in his zeal for the diffusion of liberal knowledge. But what was reasonable in the man was ridiculous in the pontiff. There remained an irreconcilable incongruity between his profession of the Primacy of Christianity and his easy epicurean philosophy.

Leo, like all the Medici after the first Cosimo, was a bad financier. His reckless expenditure contributed in no small measure to the corruption of Rome and to the ruin of the Latin Church, while it won the praises of the literary world. Julius, who had exercised rigid economy, left 700,000 ducats in the coffers of S. Angelo. The very jewels of Leo's tiara were pledged to pay his debts, when he died suddenly in 1521. During the heyday of his splendour he spent 8,000 ducats monthly on presents to his favourites and on his play-debts. His table, which was open to all the poets, singers, scholars, and buffoons of Rome, cost half the revenues of Romagna and the March. He founded the knightly Order of S. Peter to replenish his treasury, and turned the conspiracy of the Cardinal Petrucci against his life to such good account—extorting from the Cardinal Riario a fine of 5,000 ducats, and from the Cardinals Soderini and Hadrian the sum of 125,000—that Von Hutten was almost justified in treating the whole of that dark business as a mere financial speculation. The creation of thirty-nine Cardinals in 1517 brought him in above 500,000 ducats. Yet, in spite of these expedients for getting gold, the bankers of Rome were half ruined when he died. The Bini had lent him 200,000 ducats; the Gaddi, 32,000; the Ricasoli, 10,000; the Cardinal Salviati claimed a debt of 80,000; the Cardinals Santi Quattro and Armellini, each 150,000.<sup>55</sup> These figures are only interesting when we remember that the mountains of gold which they denote were squandered in æsthetic sensuality.

When the Pope was made, he said to Giuliano (Duke of Nemours): Let us enjoy the Papacy since God has given it us—*godiamoci il Papato, poichè Dio ce l' ha dato*.<sup>56</sup> It was in this spirit that Leo administered the Holy See. The keynote which he struck dominated the whole society of Rome. At Agostino Chigi's banquets, prelates of the Church and Apostolic secretaries sat side by side with beautiful Imperias and smooth-cheeked singing-boys; fishes from Byzantium and ragoûts of parrots' tongues were served on golden platters, which the guests threw from the open windows into the Tiber. Masques and balls, comedies and carnival processions filled the streets and squares and palaces of

<sup>55</sup> See Gregorovius, *Stadt Rom*, book xiv. ch. 3.

<sup>56</sup> 'Relazione di Marino Giorgi,' March 17, 1517. Alberi, ser. ii. vol. iii. p. 51.

the Eternal City with a mimicry of pagan festivals, while art went hand in hand with luxury. It seemed as though Bacchus and Pallas and Priapus would be reinstated in their old realm, and yet Rome had not ceased to call herself Christian. The hoarse rhetoric of friars in the Coliseum, and the drone of pifferari from the Ara Coeli, mingled with the Latin declamations of the Capitol and the twang of lute-strings in the Vatican. Meanwhile, amid crowds of Cardinals in hunting-dress, dances of half-naked girls, and masques of Carnival Bacchantes, moved pilgrims from the North with wide, astonished, woeful eyes—disciples of Luther, in whose soul, as in a scabbard, lay sheathed the sword of the Spirit, ready to flash forth and smite.

A more complete conception may be formed of Leo by comparing him with Julius. Julius disturbed the peace of Italy with a view to establishing the temporal power of his see. Leo returned to the old nepotism of the previous Popes, and fomented discord for the sake of the Medici. It was at one time his project to secure the kingdom of Naples for his brother Giuliano, and a Milanese sovereignty for his nephew Lorenzo. On the latter he succeeded in conferring the Duchy of Urbino, to the prejudice of its rightful owners.<sup>57</sup> With Florence in their hands and the Papacy under their control, the Medici might have swayed all Italy. Such plans, however, in the days of Francis I. and Charles V. had become impracticable; nor had any of the Medicean family stuff to undertake more than the subjugation of their native city. Julius was violent in temper, but observant of his promises. Leo was suave and slippery. He lured Gianpaolo Baglioni to Rome by a safe-conduct, and then had him imprisoned and beheaded in the Castle of S. Angelo. Julius delighted in war and was never happier than when the cannons roared around him at Mirandola. Leo vexed the soul of his master of the ceremonies because he would ride out a-hunting in topboots. Julius designed S. Peter's and comprehended Michael Angelo. Leo had the wit to patronise the poets, artists and historians who added lustre to his Court; but he brought no new great man of genius to the front. The portraits of the two Popes, both from the hand of Raphael, are exceedingly characteristic. Julius, bent and emaciated, has the nervous glance of a passionate and energetic temperament; though the brand is hoar with ashes and more than half burned out, it glows and can inflame a conflagration. Leo, heavy-jawed, dull-eyed, with thick lips and a brawny jowl, betrays the coarser fibre of a sensualist.

It has often been remarked that both Julius and Leo raised money by the sale of indulgences with a view to the building of S. Peter's, thus aggravating one of the chief scandals which provoked the Reformation. In that age of maladjusted impulses the desire to execute a great work of art, combined with the cynical resolve to turn the superstitions of

<sup>57</sup> He would have given it to Giuliano, but Giuliano was an honest man and remembered what he owed to the Della Rovere family. See the 'Relazione' of Marino Giorgi (*Rel. Ven.* ser. ii. col. iii. p. 51).

the people to account, forced rebellion to a head. Leo was unconscious of the magnitude of Luther's movement. If he thought at all seriously of the phenomenon, it stirred his wonder. Nor did he feel the necessity of reformation in the Church of Italy. The rich and many-sided life of Rome and the diplomatic interests of Italian despotism absorbed his whole attention. It was but a small matter what barbarians thought or did.

The sudden death of Leo threw the Holy College into great perplexity. To choose the new Pope without reference to political interests was impossible; and these were divided between Charles V. and Francis I. After twelve days spent by the Cardinals in conclave, the result of their innumerable schemes and counter-schemes was the election of the Cardinal of Tortosa. No one knew him; and his elevation to the Papacy, due to the influence of Charles, was almost as great a surprise to the electors as to the Romans. In their rage and horror at having chosen this barbarian, the College began to talk about the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, seeking the most improbable of all excuses for the mistake to which intrigue had driven them. 'The courtiers of the Vatican and chief officers of the Church,' says an eyewitness, 'wept and screamed and cursed and gave themselves up to despair.' Along the blank walls of the city was sprawled: 'Rome to let.' Sonnets fell in showers, accusing the Cardinals of having delivered over 'the fair Vatican to a German's fury.'<sup>58</sup> Adrian VI. came to Rome for the first time as Pope.<sup>59</sup> He knew no Italian, and talked Latin with an accent unfamiliar to southern ears. His studies had been confined to scholastic philosophy and theology. With courts he had no commerce; and he was so ignorant of the state a Pope should keep in Rome, that he wrote beforehand requesting that a modest house and garden might be hired for his abode. When he saw the Vatican, he exclaimed that here the successors, not of Peter, but of Constantine should dwell. Leo kept one hundred grooms for the service of his stable; Adrian retained but four. Two Flemish valets sufficed for his personal attendance, and to these he gave each evening one ducat for the expenses of the next day's living. A Flemish serving woman cooked his food, made his bed, and washed his linen. Rome, with its splendid immorality, its classic art and pagan culture, made the same impression on him that it made on Luther. When his courtiers pointed to the Laocoon as the most illustrious monument of ancient sculpture, he turned away with horror, murmuring: 'Idols of the Pagans!' The Belvedere, which was fast becoming the first statue-gallery in Europe, he walked up and never entered. At the same time he set himself with earnest purpose, so far as his tied hands and limited ability would go, to reform the more patent abuses of the

<sup>58</sup> See Greg. *Stadt Rom*, vol. viii. pp. 382, 383. The details about Adriano are chiefly taken from the *Relazioni* of the Venetian ambassadors, series ii. vol. iii. pp. 75-120.

<sup>59</sup> His father's name was Florus or Florentius, of the Flemish family, it is supposed, of Dedel. Berni calls him a carpet-maker. Other accounts represent him as a ship's carpenter. The Pope's baptismal name was Adrian.

Church. Leo had raised about three million ducats by the sale of offices, which represented an income of 348,000 ducats to the purchasers, and provided places for 2,550 persons. By a stroke of his pen Adrian cancelled these contracts and threw upon the world a crowd of angry and defrauded officials. It was but poor justice to remind them that their bargain with his predecessor had been illegal. Such attempts, however, at a reformation of ecclesiastical society were as ineffectual as pin-pricks in the cure of a fever which demands blood-letting. The real corruption of Rome, deeply seated in high places, remained untouched. Luther meanwhile had carried all before him in the North, and accurate observers in Rome itself dreaded some awful catastrophe for the guilty city. 'This state is set upon the razor-edge of peril; God grant we have not soon to take flight to Avignon or to the ends of the ocean. I see the downfall of this spiritual monarchy at hand. Unless God help, it is all over with us.'<sup>60</sup> Adrian met the emergency, and took up arms against the sea of troubles by expressing his horror of simony, sensuality, thievery, and so forth. The result was that he was simply laughed at. Pasquin made so merry with his name that Adrian vowed he would throw the statue into the Tiber; whereupon the Duke of Sessa wittily replied: 'Throw him to the bottom, and, like a frog, he'll go on croaking.' Berni, again, wrote one of his cleverest Capitoli upon the dunce who could not comprehend his age; and when he died, his doctor's door was ornamented with this inscription: *Liberatori patriæ Senatus Populusque Romanus*.

Great was the rejoicing when another Medici was made Pope in 1523. People hoped that the merry days of Leo would return. But things had gone too far toward dissolution. Clement VII. failed to give satisfaction to the courtiers whom his more genial cousin had delighted: even the scholars and the poets grumbled.<sup>61</sup> His rule was weak and vacillating, so that the Colonna faction raised its head again and drove him to the Castle of S. Angelo. The political horizon of Italy grew darker and more sullen daily, as before some dreadful storm. Over Rome itself impended ruin—

as when God  
Will o'er some high-iced city hang his poison  
In the sick air.<sup>62</sup>

At last the crash came. Clement by a series of treaties, treacheries, and tergiversations had deprived himself of every friend and exasperated every foe. Italy was so worn out with warfare, so accustomed to the anarchy of aimless revolutions and to the trampling to and fro of stranger squadrons on her shores, that the news of a Lutheran troop,

<sup>60</sup> See the passage quoted from the *Lettere de' Principi*, Rome, March 17, 1523, by Burckhardt, p. 99, note.

<sup>61</sup> See, for instance, Berni's sonnets. In one of these, Berni very powerfully describes the vacillation and irresolution of Clement's state-policy.

<sup>62</sup> See Varchi's picture of the state of Rome, *St. Fior.* ii. 16.

levied with the express object of pillaging Rome, and reinforced with Spanish ruffians and the scum of every nation, scarcely roused her apathy. The so-called army of Frundsberg—a horde of robbers held together by the hope of plunder—marched without difficulty to the gates of Rome. So low had the honour of Italian princes fallen that the Duke of Ferrara, by direct aid given, and the Duke of Urbino, by counter-force withheld, opened the passes of the Po and of the Apennines to these marauders. They lost their general in Lombardy. The Constable Bourbon, who succeeded him, died in the assault of the city. Then Rome for nine months was abandoned to the lust, rapacity, and cruelty of some 30,000 brigands without a leader. It was then discovered to what lengths of insult, violence, and bestiality the brutal barbarism of Germans and the avarice of Spaniards could be carried. Clement, beleaguered in the Castle of S. Angelo, saw day and night the smoke ascend from desolated palaces and desecrated temples, heard the wailing of women and the groans of tortured men mingle with the jests of Lutheran drunkards and the curses of Castilian bandits. Roaming its galleries and leaning from its windows he exclaimed with Job:<sup>63</sup> *'quare de vulvâ eduxisti me? qui utinam consumptus essem, ne oculus me videret.'* What the Romans, emasculated by luxury and priest rule, what the Cardinals and prelates, lapped in sensuality and sloth, were made to suffer during this long agony can scarcely be described. It is too horrible. When at last the barbarians, sated with blood, surfeited with lechery, glutted with gold, and decimated by pestilence, withdrew Rome raised her head a widow. From the shame and torment of that sack she never recovered, never became again the gay licentious lovely capital of arts and letters, the glittering gilded Rome of Leo. But the kings of the earth took pity on her desolation. The treaty of Amiens (August 18, 1527), concluded between Francis I. and Henry VIII. against Charles V., in whose name this insult had been offered to the Holy City of Christendom, together with Charles's own tardy willingness to make amends, restored the Papacy to the respect of Europe.

It is well known that at this crisis the Emperor seriously thought of putting an end to the State of the Church. His councillors advised him to restore the Pope to his original rank of Bishop, and to make Rome again the seat of empire.<sup>64</sup> But to have done this would have been impossible under the political conditions of the sixteenth century and in the face of Christendom still Catholic. His deliberations, therefore, cost Rome the miseries of the sack; but they were speedily superseded by the determination to strengthen the Papal by means of the Imperial authority in Italy. Florence was given as a makepeace offering to the contemptible Medici; and it remains the worst shame of Clement that he used the dregs of the army that had sacked Rome for the enslavement of his mother-city.

<sup>63</sup> So Luigi Guicciardini, in his account of the sack of Rome, relates.

<sup>64</sup> See the authorities in Greg. *Stadt Rom*, vol. viii. pp. 569, 575.

Internally, the Papal State had learned by its misfortunes the necessity of a reform. Sadoletto, writing in the September of that memorable year to Clement, reminds him that the sufferings of Rome have satisfied the wrath of God, and that the way was now open for an amelioration of manners and laws.<sup>65</sup> No force of arms could prevent the Holy City from returning to a better life, and proving that the Christian priesthood was not a mere mockery and sham.<sup>66</sup> In truth the Counter-Reformation may be said to date historically from 1527.

<sup>65</sup> It was universally recognised in Italy that the sack of Rome was a punishment inflicted by Providence upon the godless city. Without quoting great authorities like Sadoletto or the Bishop of Fossombrone, one of whose letters gives a really awful picture of Roman profligacy (*Opere di M. G. Guidiccioni*, Barbera, vol. i. p. 193), we find abundant testimony to this persuasion regarding the intolerable vice of Rome, even in men devoid of moral conscience. Aretino (*La Cortigiana*, end of Act. i. Sc. xxiii.) writes: 'Io mi credeva che il castigo, che l' ha dato Cristo per mano degli Spagnuoli, l' avesse fatta migliore, et è più scellerata che mai. Bandello (*Novelle*, Parte ii. xxxvi), alluding to the sack, remarks in a parenthesis, 'benche i peccati di quella città meritassero esser castigati.' After adducing two such witnesses, it would weaken the case to cite Trissino or Vettori, both of whom expressed themselves with force upon the iniquities of Papal Rome.

<sup>66</sup> Compare *Lettere de' Princ.* ii. 77; Cardinal Cajetan, and other testimonies quoted by Greg. *Stadt Rom.* vol. viii. pp. 568, 578.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE CHURCH AND MORALITY

*Corruption of the Church—Degradation and Division of Italy—Opinions of Machiavelli, Guicciardini, and King Ferdinand of Naples—Incapacity of the Italians for thorough Reformation—The Worldliness and Culture of the Renaissance—Witness of Italian Authors against the Papal Court and the Convents—Superstitious Respect for Relics—Separation between Religion and Morality—Mixture of Contempt and Reverence for the Popes—Gianpaolo Baglioni—Religious Sentiments of the Tyrannicides—Pietro Paolo Boscoli—Tenacity of Religions—The direct Interest of the Italians in Rome—Reverence for the Sacraments of the Church—Opinions pronounced by Englishmen on Italian Immorality—Bad Faith and Sensuality—The Element of the Fancy in Italian Vice—The Italians not Cruel, or Brutal, or Intemperate by Nature—Domestic Murders—Sense of Honour in Italy—Onore and Onestà—General Refinement—Good Qualities of the People—Religious Revivalism.*

THE corruption of the Papal Court involved a corresponding moral weakness throughout Italy. This makes the history of the Popes of the Renaissance important precisely in those details which formed the subject of the preceding chapter. Morality and religion suffered an almost complete separation in the fifteenth century. The chiefs of the Church with cynical effrontery violated every tradition of Christ and the Apostles, so that the example of Rome was in some sense the justification of fraud, violence, lust, filthy living, and ungodliness to the whole nation.

The contradiction between the spiritual pretensions of the Popes and their actual worldliness was not so glaring to the men of the Renaissance, accustomed by long habit to the spectacle of this anomaly, as it is to us. Nor would it be scientific to imagine that any Italian in that age judged by moral standards similar to ours. Æsthetic propriety rather than strict conceptions of duty ruled the conduct even of the best, and it is wonderful to observe with what artless simplicity the worst sinners believed they might make peace in time of need with heaven. Yet there were not wanting profound thinkers who traced the national decay of the Italians to the corruption of the Church. Among these Machiavelli stands foremost. In a celebrated passage of the 'Discorsi',<sup>1</sup> after treating the whole subject of the connection between good government and religion, he breaks forth into this fiery criticism of the Papacy: 'Had the religion of Christianity been preserved according to the ordinances of its founder, the states and commonwealths of Christendom would have been far more united and far happier than

<sup>1</sup> Lib. i. cap. 12.



they are. Nor is it possible to form a better estimate of its decay than by observing that, in proportion as we approach nearer to the Roman Church, the head of this religion, we find less piety prevail among the nations. Considering the primitive constitution of that Church, and noting how diverse are its present customs, we are forced to judge that without doubt either ruin or a scourge is now impending over it. And since some men are of opinion that the welfare of Italy depends upon the Church, I wish to put forth such arguments as occur to my mind to the contrary; and of these I will adduce two, which, as I think, are irrefutable. The first is that: that owing to the evil ensample of the Papal Court, Italy has lost all piety and all religion: whence follow infinite troubles and disorders; for as religion implies all good, so its absence implies the contrary. Consequently, to the Church and priests of Rome we Italians owe this obligation first—that we have become void of religion and corrupt. But we also owe them another, even greater, which is the cause of our ruin. I mean that the Church has maintained and still maintains Italy divided. Of a truth no province ever was united and prosperous, unless it were reduced beneath the sway of one republic or one monarch, as is the case with France and Spain. And the reason why Italy is not in this condition, but has neither commonwealth nor monarch for head, is none other than the Church: for the Church, established in our midst and exercising a temporal authority, has never had the force or vigour to extend its sway over the whole country and to become the ruling power in Italy. Nor on the other hand has it been so feeble as not to be able, when afraid of losing its temporalities, to call in a foreign potentate, as a counterpoise in its defence against those powers which threatened to become supreme. Of the truth of this, past history furnishes many instances; as when, by the help of Charlemagne, the Popes expelled the Lombards; and when in our own days they humbled Venice by the aid of France, and afterwards drove out the French by calling in the Swiss. So then the Church, being on the one hand too weak to grasp the whole of Italy, and at the same time too jealous to allow another power to do so, has prevented our union beneath one head, and has kept us under scattered lords and princes. These have caused so much discord and debility that Italy has become the prey not only of powerful barbarians, but also of every assailant. And this we owe solely and entirely to the Church. In order to learn by experience the truth of what I say, one ought to be able to send the Roman Court, armed with like authority to that it wields in Italy, to take up its abode among the Swiss, who at the present moment are the only nation living, as regards religion and military discipline, according to the antique fashion; he would then see that the evil habits of that Court would in no long space of time create more disorders than any other misfortune that could arise there in any period whatever. In this scientific and deliberate opinion pronounced by the profoundest thinker of the sixteenth century, the Papacy is accused of having caused both the moral depravation and the political disunion of Italy. The

second of these points, which belongs to the general history of the Italian nation, might be illustrated abundantly: but one other sentence from the pen of Machiavelli exposes the ruinous and selfish policy of the Church more forcibly than could be done by copious examples:<sup>2</sup> 'In this way the Pontiffs at one time by love of their religion, at other times for the furtherance of their ambitious schemes, have never ceased to sow the seeds of disturbance and to call foreigners into Italy, spreading wars, making and unmaking princes, and preventing stronger potentates from holding the province they were too feeble to rule.'

Guicciardini, commenting upon the 'Discorsi' of Machiavelli, begins his gloss upon the passage I have just translated with these emphatic words:<sup>3</sup> 'It would be impossible to speak so ill of the Roman Court but that more abuse would not be merited, seeing it is an infamy, an example of all the shames and scandals of the world.' He then proceeds to argue, like Machiavelli, that the greatness of the Church prevented Italy from becoming a nation under one head, showing, however, at the same time that the Italians had derived much benefit from their division into separate states.<sup>4</sup> To the concurrent testimony of these great philosophic writers may be added the evidence of a practical statesman, Ferdinand, King of Naples, who in 1493 wrote as follows:<sup>5</sup> 'From year to year up to this time we have seen the Popes seeking to hurt and hurting their neighbours, without having to act on the defensive or receiving any injury. Of this we are ourselves the witness, by reason of the things they have done and attempted against us through their inborn ambition; and of the many misfortunes which have happened of late in Italy it is clear that the Popes are authors.'

It is not so much, however, with the political as with the moral aspect of the Church that we are at present concerned: and on the latter point Guicciardini may once more be confronted with his illustrious contemporary. In his aphorisms he says:<sup>6</sup> 'No man hates the ambition, avarice, and effeminacy of the priests more than I do; for these vices, odious in themselves, are most unseemly in men who make a profession of living in special dependence on the Deity. Besides, they are so contradictory that they cannot be combined except in a very extraordinary subject. My position under several Popes has compelled me to desire

<sup>2</sup> *Ist. Fior.* lib. i.

<sup>3</sup> Guicc. *Op. Ined.* vol. i. p. 27.

<sup>4</sup> In another place (*Op. Ined.* vol. i. p. 104) Guicciardini describes the rule of priests as founded on violence of two sorts; 'perchè ci sforzano con le armi temporali e con le spirituali.' It may be well to collect the chief passages in Machiavelli and Guicciardini, besides those already quoted, which criticise the Papacy in relation to Italian politics. The most famous is at the end of the fourth book of the *Istoria d'Italia* (Edn. Rosini, vol. ii. pp. 218-30). Next may be placed the sketch of Papal History in Machiavelli's *Istorie Fiorentine* (lib. i. cap. 9-25). The eleventh chapter of the *Principe* gives a short sketch of the growth of the temporal power, so framed as to be acceptable to the Medici, but steeped in the most acid irony. See, in particular, the sentence 'Costoro solo hanno stati e non li difendono, hanno sudditi e non li governano,' &c.

<sup>5</sup> See the despatch quoted by Gregorovius, *Stadt Rom*, vol. vii. p. 7, note.

<sup>6</sup> *Op. Ined. Ricordi* No. 28. Compare Ariosto, *Satire* i. 208-27.

their aggrandisement for the sake of my own profit.<sup>7</sup> Otherwise, I should have loved Martin Luther like myself—not that I might break loose from the laws which Christianity, as it is usually interpreted and comprehended, imposes on us, but that I might see that horde of villains reduced within due limits, and forced to live either without vices or without power.'

These utterances are all the more remarkable because they do not proceed from the deep sense of holiness which animated reformers like Savonarola. Machiavelli was not zealous for the doctrines of Christianity so much as for the decencies of an established religion. In one passage of the 'Discorsi' he even pronounces his opinion that the Christian faith, compared with the creeds of antiquity, had enfeebled national spirit.<sup>8</sup> Privately, moreover, he was himself stained with the moral corruption which he publicly condemned. Guicciardini, again, in the passage before us, openly avows his egotism. Keen-sighted as they were in theory, these politicians suffered in their own lives from that gangrene which had penetrated the upper classes of Italy to the marrow. Their patriotism and their desire for righteousness were not strong enough to make them relinquish the pleasure and the profit they derived from the existing state of things. Nor had they the energy or the opportunity to institute a thorough revolution. Italy, as Machiavelli pointed out in another passage of the 'Discorsi,' had become too prematurely decrepit for reinvigorating changes;<sup>9</sup> and the splendid appeal with which the 'Principe' is closed must even to its author have sounded like a flourish of rhetorical trumpets.

Moreover, it seemed impossible for an Italian to rise above the conception of a merely formal reformation, or to reach that higher principle of life which consists in the enunciation of a new religious truth. The whole argument in the 'Discorsi' which precedes the chapter I have quoted, treats of religion not in its essence as pure Christianity, but as a state engine for the maintenance of public order and national well-being.<sup>10</sup> That Milton and Cromwell may have so regarded religion is true: but they had, besides, a personal sense of the necessity of righteousness, the fear of God, at the root of their political convictions. While Machiavelli and Guicciardini wished to deprive the Popes of temporal sovereignty, in order that the worst scandals of their Court might be suppressed, and that the peace of Italy might be secured, Savonarola desired to purge the Church of sin, but to retain its hier-

<sup>7</sup> Guicciardini had been secretary and vicerent of the Medicean Popes. See back, p. 140.

<sup>8</sup> *Discorsi*, ii. 2, iii. 1. These chapters breathe the bitterest contempt for Christianity, the most undisguised hatred for its historical development, the intensest rancour against Catholic ecclesiastics.

<sup>9</sup> *Discorsi*, i. 55.

<sup>10</sup> Mach. *Disc.* i. 12, after exposing the shams on which, as he believed, the religious institutions of Numa rested, asserts that, however much governors may be persuaded of the falseness of religions, it is their duty to maintain them: 'e debbono. . . come che le giudicassero false, favorirle e accrescerle.'

archy and its dogmas inviolate. Neither the politicians nor the prophet had discerned, what Luther and the nations of the North saw clearly, that a fresh element of spiritual vitality was necessary for the regeneration of society; or, in other words, that good government presupposes living religion, and not that religion should be used as an engine for the consolidation of empire over the people.<sup>11</sup>

The inherent feebleness of Italy in this respect proceeded from an intellectual apathy toward religious questions, produced partly by the stigma attaching to unorthodoxy, partly by the absorbing interests of secular culture, partly by the worldliness of the Renaissance, partly by the infamy of the ecclesiastics, and partly by the enervating influence of tyrannies. However bold a man might be, he dreaded the name of heretic; the term *paterino*, originally applied to religious innovators, had become synonymous in common phraseology with rogue. It was a point of good society and refined taste to support the Church. Again, the mental faculties of Italy had for three centuries been taxed to the utmost in studies wide apart from the field of religious faith. Art, scholarship, philosophy, and meditation upon politics had given a definite direction to the minds of thinking men, so that little energy was left for those instinctive movements of the spirit which produced the German Reformation. The great work of Italy had been the genesis of the Renaissance, the development of modern culture. And the tendencies of the Renaissance were worldly: its ideal of human life left no room for a pure and ardent intuition into spiritual truth. Scholars occupied with the interpretation of classic authors, artists bent upon investing current notions with the form of beauty, could hardly be expected to exclaim: 'The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil, that is understanding.'<sup>12</sup> Materialism ruled the speculations no less than the conduct of the age. Pamponazzo preached an atheistic doctrine, with the plausible reservation of *Salva Fide*, which then covered all. The more delicate thinkers, Pico and Ficino, sought to reconcile irreconcilables by fusing philosophy and theology, while they distinguished truths of science from truths of revelation. It seems

<sup>11</sup> Yet read the curious passage (*Disc. iii. 1*) in which Machiavelli discusses the regeneration of religion by a return to its vital principle, and shows how S. Francis and S. Dominic had done this in the thirteenth century. It was precisely what Luther was designing while Machiavelli was writing.

<sup>12</sup> It is well known that Savonarola's objection to classic culture was based upon his perception of its worldliness. It is very remarkable to note the feeling on this point of some of the greatest Northern scholars. Erasmus, for example, writes: 'Unus adhuc scrupulus habet animum meum, ne sub obtentu priscae literaturae renascentis. Caput erigere conetur Paganismus, ut sunt inter Christianos qui titulo pæne duntaxat Christum agnoscunt, ceterum intus Gentilitatem spirant'—Letter 207 (quoted by Milman in his *Quarterly* article on Erasmus). Ascham and Melancthon passed similar judgments upon the Italian scholars. The nations of the North had the Italians at a disadvantage, for they entered into their labours, and all the dangerous work of sympathy with the ancient world, upon which modern scholarship was based, had been done in Italy before Germany and England came into the field.

meanwhile to have occurred to no one in Italy that the liberation of the reason necessitated an abrupt departure from Catholicism. They did not perceive that a power antagonistic to mediæval orthodoxy had been generated. This was in great measure due to indifference; for the Church herself had taught her children by example to regard her dogmas and her discipline as a convenient convention. It required all the scourges of the Inquisition to flog the nation back, not to lively faith, but to hypocrisy. Furthermore, the political conditions of Italy were highly unfavourable to a profound religious revolution. The thirst for national liberty which inspired England in the sixteenth century, impelling the despotic Tudors to cast off the yoke of Rome, arming Howard the Catholic against the holy fleet of Philip, and joining prince and people in one aspiration after freedom, was impossible in Italy. The tone of Machiavelli's 'Principe,' the whole tenor of Castiglione's 'Cortigiano,' prove this without the need of further demonstration.

Few things are more difficult than to estimate the exact condition of a people at any given period with regard to morality and religion. And this difficulty is increased tenfold when the age presents such rapid transitions and such bewildering complexities as mark the Renaissance. Yet we cannot omit to notice the attitude of the Italians at large in relation to the Church, and to determine in some degree the character of their national morality. Against the corruption of Rome one cry of hatred and contempt arises from a crowd of witnesses. Dante's fiery denunciations, Jacopone's threats, the fierce invectives of Petrarch, and the thundering prophecies of Joachim lead the chorus. Boccaccio follows with his scathing irony. 'Send the most obstinate Jew to Rome,' he says, 'and the profligacy of the Papal Court will not fail to convert him to the faith that can resist such obloquy.'<sup>13</sup> Another glaring scandal was the condition of the convents. All novelists combine in painting the depravity of the religious houses as a patent fact in social life. Boccaccio, Sacchetti, Bandello, and Masuccio may be mentioned in particular for their familiar delineation of a profligacy which was interwoven with the national existence.<sup>14</sup> The comic poets take the same

<sup>13</sup> We may compare this Umbrian Rispetto for the opposite view:—

A Roma Santa ce so gito anch' io,  
E ho visto co' miei occhi il fatto mio:  
E quando a Roma ce s' è posto il piede,  
Resta la rabbia e se ne va la fede.

<sup>14</sup> It may not be out of place to collect some passages from Masuccio's *Novelle* on the Clergy, premising that what he writes with the fierceness of indignation is repeated with the cynicism of indulgence by contemporary novelists. Speaking of the Popes, he says (ed. Napoli, Morano, 1874): 'me tacerò non solo de loro scelesti ed enormissimi vizi e pubblici e occulti adoperati, e de li officii, de beneficii, prelature, i vermigli cappell', che all' incanto per loro morte vendono, ma del camauro del principe San Pietro che né è già stato fatto pattuito baratto non farò alcuna mentione.' Descending to prelates, he uses similar language (p. 64): 'Non possa mai pervenire ad alcun grado di prelatura se non col favore del maestro della zecca, e quelle conviensela comprare all' incanto come si fa dei cavalli in fiera.' A priest is (p. 31) 'il venerabile lupo.' The members of religious orders are (p. 534) 'ministri de satanasso . . . soldati del gran

course, and delight in ridiculing the gross manners of the clergy. Nor do the ecclesiastics spare themselves. Poggio, the author of the 'Facetiæ,' held benefices and places at the Papal Court. Bandello was a Dominican and nephew of the General of his order. Folengo was a Benedictine. Bibbiena became a Cardinal. Berni received a Canonry in the Cathedral of Florence. Such was the open and acknowledged immorality of the priests in Rome that more than one Papal edict was issued forbidding them to keep houses of bad reputation or to act as panders.<sup>15</sup> Among the aphorisms of Pius II. is recorded the saying that if there were good reasons for enjoining celibacy on the clergy, there were far better and stronger arguments for insisting on their marriage.<sup>16</sup>

Some of the contempt and hatred expressed by the Italian satirists for the two great orders of S. Francis and S. Dominic may perhaps be due to an ancient grudge against them as a Papal police founded in the interests of orthodoxy. But the chief point aimed at is the mixture of hypocrisy with immorality, which rendered them odious to all classes of society. At the same time the Franciscans embraced among their lay brethren nearly all the population of Italy, and to die in the habit of the order was thought the safest way of cheating the devil of his due. Corruption had gone so far and deep that it was universally recognised and treated with the sarcasm of levity. It roused no sincere reaction, and stimulated no persistent indignation. Everyone acknowledged it; yet everyone continued to live indolently according to the fashion of his forefathers, acting up to Ovid's maxim—

Pro magnâ parte vetustas  
Creditus; acceptam parce movere fidem.

diavolo.' (p. 25) 'più facilmente tra cento soldati se ne troverebbero la metà buoni, che tra tutto un capitolo de frati ne fosse uno senza bruttissima macchia.' It is perilous to hold any communication with them (p. 39): 'Con loro non altri che usurai, fornicatori, e omini di mala sorte conversare si vedeno.' Their sins against nature (p. 65), the secret marriages of monks and nuns (p. 83), the 'fetide cloache di monache' choked with the fruits of infanticide (p. 84), not to mention their avarice (p. 55) and gross impiety (p. 52), are described with a naked sincerity that bears upon its face the stamp of truth.

<sup>15</sup> A famous passage from Agrippa (*De Vanitate Scientiarum*) deserves a place here. After alluding to Sixtus IV. he says that many state officers 'in civitatibus suis lupanaria construunt foveantque, nonnihil ex meretrice questu etiam arario suo accumulantes emolumentis; quod quidem in Italiâ non rarum est, ubi etiam Romana scorta in singulas hebdomadas Julium pendent Pontifici, qui census annuus nonnullam viginti millia ducatos excedit, adeoque Ecclesiæ procerum id munus est, ut una cum Ecclesiarum proventus etiam lenociniorum numerent mercedem. Sic enim ego illos supputantes aliquando audiui: Habet, inquiunt, ille duo beneficia, unum curatum aureorum viginti, alterum prioratum ducatorum quadraginta, et tres putanas in burdello, quæ reddunt singulis hebdomadibus Julios Vingtî.'

<sup>16</sup> Very few ecclesiastics of high rank escaped the contagion of Roman society. It was fashionable for men like Bembo and La Casa to form connections with women of the *demi-monde* and to recognise their children, whose legitimization they frequently procured. The Capitoli of the burlesque poets show that this laxity of conduct was pardonable, when compared with other laughingly avowed and all but universal indulgences. Once more, compare Guidiccioni's letter to M. Giamb. Bernardi, *Opp.* vol. i. p. 193.

It is only this incurable indifference that renders Machiavelli's comic portraits of Fra Alberigo and Fra Timoteo at all intelligible. They are neither satires nor caricatures, but simple pictures drawn for the amusement of contemporaries and the stupefaction of posterity.

The criticism of the Italian writers, so far as ye have yet followed it, was directed against two separate evils—the vicious worldliness of Rome, and the demoralisation of the clergy both in their dealings with the people and in their conventual life. Contempt for false miracles and spurious reliques, and the horror of the traffic in indulgences, swelled the storm of discontent among the more enlightened. But the people continued to make saints, to adore wonder-working shrines, and to profit by the spiritual advantages which could be bought. Pius II., mindful of the honour of his native city, canonised S. Bernardino and S. Catherine of Siena. Innocent VIII. consecrated a chapel for the Lance of Longinus, which he had received from the Turk as part-payment for the guardianship of Djem. The Venetian Senate offered 10,000 ducats for the seamless coat of Christ (1455). The whole of Italy was agitated by the news that S. Andrew's head had arrived from Patras (1462). The Pope and his Cardinals went forth to meet it near the Milvian bridge. There Pius II. pronounced a Latin speech of welcome, while Bessarion delivered an oration when the precious member was deposited in S. Peter's. In this passion for reliques two different sentiments seem to have been combined—the merely superstitious belief in the efficacy of charms, which caused the Venetians to guard the body of S. Mark so jealously, and the Neapolitans to watch the liquefaction of the blood of S. Januarius with a frenzy of excitement—and that nobler respect for the persons of the mighty dead which induced Sigismondo Malatesta to transport the body of Gemistus Pletho to Rimini, and which rendered the supposed coffin of Aristotle at Palermo an object of admiration to Mussulman and Christian alike. The bones of Virgil, it will be remembered, had been built into the walls of Naples, while those of Livy were honoured with splendid sepulture at Padua.

Owing to the separation between religion and morality which existed in Italy under the influence of Papal and monastic profligacy, the Italians saw no reason why spiritual benefits should not be purchased from a notoriously rapacious Pontiff, or why the penalty of hell should not depend upon the mere word of a consecrated monster. The Pope as successor of S. Peter, and the Pope as Roman sovereign, were two separate beings. Many curious indications of the mixed feeling of the people upon this point, and of the advantage which the Pope derived from his anomalous position, may be gathered from the historians of the period. Machiavelli, in his narrative of the massacre at Sinigaglia, relates that Vitellozzo Vitelli, while being strangled by Cesare Borgia's assassin, begged hard that the father of his murderer, the horrible Alexander, might be entreated to pronounce his absolution. The same Alexander was nearly suffocated in the Vatican by the French soldiers who crowded round to kiss his mantle, and who had made him tremble



for his life a few days previously. Cellini on his knees implored Pope Clement to absolve him from the guilt of homicide and theft, yet spoke of him as 'transformed to a savage beast' by a sudden access of fury. At one time he trembled before the awful majesty of Christ's Vicar, revealed in Paul III.; at another he reviled him as a man 'who neither believed in God nor in any other article of religion.' A mysterious sanctity environed the person of the Pontiff. When Gianpaolo Baglioni held Julius II. in his power in Perugia, he respected the Pope's freedom, though he knew that Julius would overthrow his tyranny. Machiavelli condemns this as cowardice, but it was wholly consistent with the sentiment of the age. 'It cannot have been goodness or conscience which restrained him,' writes the philosopher of Florence, 'for the heart of a man who cohabited with his sister, and had massacred his cousins and his nephews, could not have harboured any piety. We must conclude that men know not how to be either guilty in a noble manner, or entirely good. Although crime may have a certain grandeur of its own, or at least a mixture of more generous motives, they do not attain to this. Gianpaolo, careless though he was about incest and parricide, could not, or dared not, on a just occasion, achieve an exploit for which the whole world would have admired his spirit, and by which he would have won immortal glory: for he would have been the first to show how little prelates, living and ruling as they do, deserve to be esteemed, and would have done a deed superior in its greatness to all the infamy, to all the peril, that it might have brought with it.'<sup>17</sup> It is difficult to know which to admire most, the superstition of Gianpaolo, or the cynicism of the commentary, the spurious piety which made the tyrant miss his opportunity, or the false standard of moral sublimity by which the half-ironical critic measures his mistake. In combination they produce a lively impression of the truth of what I have attempted to establish—that in Italy at this period religion survived as superstition even among the most depraved, and that the crimes of the Church had produced a schism between this superstition and morality.

While the Church was thus gradually deviating more and more directly from the Christian ideal, and was exhibiting to Italy an ensample of worldliness and evil living, the Italians, earlier than any other European nation, had become imbued with the spirit of the ancient world. Instead of the Gospel and the Lives of the Saints, men studied Plutarch and Livy with avidity. The tyrannicides of Greece and the suicides of the Roman Empire, patriots like Harmodius and Brutus,

<sup>17</sup> *Discorsi*, i. 27. This episode in Gianpaolo Baglioni's life may be illustrated by the curious story told about Gabrino Fondulo, the tyrant of Cremona. The Emperor Sigismund and Pope John XXIII. were his guests together in the year 1414. Part of their entertainment consisted in visiting the sights of Cremona with their host, who took them up the great Tower (396 feet high) without any escort. They all three returned safely, but when Gabrino was executed at Milan in 1425, he remarked that he only regretted one thing in the course of his life—namely, that he had not pitched Pope and Emperor together from the Torazzo. What a golden opportunity to have let slip! The story is told by Antonio Campo, *Historia di Cremona* (Milan, 1645), p. 114.

philosophers like Seneca and Pætus Thræsea, seemed to the humanists of the fifteenth century more admirable than the martyrs and confessors of the faith. Pagan virtues were strangely mingled with confused and ill-assimilated precepts of the Christian Church, while pagan vices wore a halo borrowed from the lustre of the newly found and passionately welcomed poets of antiquity. Blending the visionary intuitions of the Middle Ages with the positive and mundane ethics of the ancients, the Italians of the Renaissance strove to adopt the sentiments and customs of an age long dead and not to be resuscitated. At the same time the rhetorical taste of the nation inclined the more adventurous and passionate natures to seek glory by dramatic exhibitions of personal heroism. The Greek ideal of τὸ καλόν, the Roman conception of *Virtus*, agitated the imagination of a people who had been powerfully influenced by professors of eloquence, by public orators, by men of letters, masters in the arts of style and of parade. Painting and sculpture, and that magnificence of public life which characterised the fifteenth century, contributed to the substitution of æsthetic for moral or religious standards. Actions were estimated by the effect which they produced; and to sin against the laws of culture was of more moment than to transgress the code of Christianity. Still, the men of the Renaissance could not forget the creed which they had drawn in with their mothers' milk, but which the Church had not adjusted to the new conditions of the growing age. The result was a wild phantasmagoric chaos of confused and clashing influences.

Of this peculiar moral condition the records of the numerous tyrannicides supply many interesting examples.<sup>18</sup> Girolamo Olgiati offered prayers to S. Ambrose for protection before he stabbed the Duke of Milan in S. Stephen's Church.<sup>19</sup> The Pazzi conspirators, intimidated by the sanctity of the Florentine Duomo, had to employ a priest to wield the sacrilegious dagger.<sup>20</sup> Pietro Paolo Boscoli's last confession, after the failure of his attempt to assassinate the Medici in 1513, adds further details in illustration of the mixture of religious feeling with patriotic paganism. Luca della Robbia, the nephew of the great sculptor of that name, and himself no mean artist, visited his friend Boscoli on the night of his execution, and wrote a minute account of their interview. Both of these men were members of the Confraternità de' Neri, who assumed the duty of comforting condemned prisoners with spiritual counsel, prayer, and exhortation. The narrative, dictated in the choicest vernacular Tuscan, by an artist whose charity and beauty of soul transpire in every line in contrast with the fiercer fortitude of Boscoli, is one of the most valuable original documents for this period which we possess.<sup>21</sup> What is most striking is the combination of deeply rooted and almost infantine piety with antique heroism in the young patriot.

<sup>18</sup> For the Italian ethics of tyrannicide, see back, pp. 85, 86.

<sup>19</sup> See p. 84.

<sup>20</sup> See p. 200.

<sup>21</sup> It is printed in *Arch. Stor.* vol. i.

He is greatly concerned because, ignorant of his approaching end, he had eaten a hearty supper: 'Son troppo carico di cibo, et ho mangiato cose insalate; in modo che non mi pare poter unir lo spirito a Dio . . . Iddio abbi di me misericordia, che costoro m' hanno carico di cibo. Oh indiscrezione!'<sup>22</sup> Then he expresses a vehement desire for the services of a learned confessor, to resolve his intellectual doubts, pleading with all the earnestness of desperate conviction that the salvation of his soul must depend upon his orthodoxy at the last. He complains that he ought to have been allowed at least a month's seclusion with good friars before he was brought face to face with death. At another time he is chiefly anxious to free himself from classic memories: 'Deh! Luca, cavatemi della testa quel Bruto, acciò ch' io faccia questo passo interamente da Cristiano.'<sup>23</sup> Then again it grieves him that the tears of compunction, which he has been taught to regard as the true sign of a soul at one with God, will not flow. About the mere fact of dying he has no anxiety. The philosophers have strengthened him upon that point. He is only eager to die piously. When he tries to pray, he can barely remember the Paternoster and the Ave Maria. That reminds him how easy it would have been to have spent his time better, and he bids Luca remember that the mind a man makes for himself in life, will be with him in death. When they bring him a picture of Christ, he asks whether he needs *that* to fix his soul upon his Saviour. Throughout this long contention of so many varying thoughts, he never questions the morality of the act for which he is condemned to die. Luca, however, has his doubts, and privately asks the confessor whether S. Thomas Aquinas had not discountenanced tyrannicide. 'Yes,' answers the monk, 'in case the people have elected their own tyrant, but not when he has imposed himself on them by force.' This casuistical answer satisfies Luca that his friend may reasonably be held blameless. After confessing, Boscoli received the sacrament with great piety, and died bravely. The confessor told Luca, weeping, that he was sure the young man's soul had gone straight to Paradise, and that he might be reckoned a real martyr. His head after death was like that of an angel; and Luca was, we know, a connoisseur in angels' heads. Boscoli was only thirty-two years of age; he had light hair, and was short-sighted.

To this narrative might be added the apology written by Lorenzino de' Medici, after the murder of his cousin Alessandro in 1536.<sup>24</sup> He relies for his defence entirely upon arguments borrowed from Pagan ethics, and by his treatment of the subject vindicates for himself that

<sup>22</sup> 'I am over-burdened with food, and I have eaten salt meats: so that I do not seem able to join my spirit to God. . . . God have pity on me, for they have burdened me with food. Oh, how thoughtless of them!' His words cannot be translated. Naïf in the extreme, they become ludicrous in English.

<sup>23</sup> 'Ah, Luca, turn that Brutus out of my head, in order that I may take this last step wholly as a Christian man!'

<sup>24</sup> It is printed at the end of the third volume of Varchi, pp. 283-95; compare p. 210. A medal in honour of Lorenzino's tyrannicide was struck with a profile copied from Michael Angelo's bust of Brutus.

name of Brutus with which Filippo Strozzi in person at Venice, and Varchi and Molza in Latin epigrams, saluted him. There is no trace of Christian feeling in this strong and splendid display of rhetorical ability; nor does any document of the age more forcibly exhibit the extent to which classical studies had influenced the morality of the Renaissance. Lorenzino, however, when he wrote it, was not, like Boscoli, upon the point of dying.

The last thing to perish in a nation is its faith. The whole history of the world proves that no anomalies are so glaring, no inconsistencies so paradoxical, as to sap the credit of a religious system which has once been firmly rooted in the habits, instincts, and traditions of a race: and what remains longest is often the least rational portion. Religions from the first are not the product of logical reflection or experiment, but of sentiment and aspiration. They come into being as simple intuitions, and afterwards invade the province of the reason and assimilate the thought of centuries to their own conceptions. This is the secret of their strength as well as the source of their weakness. It is only a stronger enthusiasm, a new intuition, a fresh outburst of emotional vitality, that can supplant the old:—

‘Total rimed’o ha questo aspro furore,  
Tale acqua suole spegner questo fuoco,  
Come d’asse si trae chiodo con chiodo.’

Criticism from without, internal corruption, patent absurdity, are comparatively powerless to destroy those habits of belief which once have taken hold upon the fancy and the feeling of a nation. The work of dissolution proceeds in silence and in secret. But the established order subsists until the moment comes for a new synthesis. And in the sixteenth century the necessary impulse of regeneration was to come, not from Italy, satisfied with the serenity of her art, preoccupied with her culture, and hardened to the infamy of her corruption, but from the Germany of the barbarians she despised.

These considerations will help to explain how it was that the Church, in spite of its corruption, stood its ground and retained the respect of the people in Italy. We must moreover bear in mind that, bad as it was, it still to some extent maintained the Christian verity. Apart from the Roman Curia and the Convents, there existed a hierarchy of able and God-fearing men, who by the sanctity of their lives, by the gravity of their doctrine, by the eloquence of their preaching, by their ministrations to the sick, by the relief of the poor, by the maintenance of hospitals, Monti di Pietà, schools and orphanages, kept alive in the people of Italy the ideal at least of a religion pure and undefiled before God.<sup>25</sup> In the tottering statue of the Church some true metal might be found between the pinchbeck at the summit and the clay of the foundation.

It must also be remembered how far the worldly interests and do-

<sup>25</sup> See the life of S. Antonino, the good Archbishop of Florence.

mestic sympathies of the Italians were engaged in the maintenance of their Church system. The fibres of the Church were intertwined with the very heartstrings of the people. Few families could not show one or more members who had chosen the clerical career, and who looked to Rome for patronage, employment, and perhaps advancement to the highest honours. The whole nation felt a pride in the Eternal City: patriotic vanity and personal interest were alike involved in the maintenance of the metropolis of Christendom, which drew the suites of ambassadors, multitudes of pilgrims, and the religious traffic of the whole of Europe to the shores of Italy. It was easy for Germans and Englishmen to reason calmly about dethroning the Papal hierarchy. Italians, however they might loathe the temporal power, could not willingly forego the spiritual primacy of the civilised world.

Moreover, the sacraments of the Church, the absolutions, consecrations, and benedictions which priests dispensed or withheld at pleasure, had by no means lost their power. To what extent even the nations of the North still clung to them is proved by our own Liturgy, framed in the tumult of war with Rome, yet so worded as to leave the utmost resemblance to the old ritual consistent with the spirit of the Reformation. Far more imposing were they in their effect upon the imagination of Italians, who had never dreamed of actual rebellion, who possessed the fountain of Apostolical privileges in the person of the Pope, and whose southern temperament inclined them to a more senuous and less metaphysical conception of Christianity than the Germans or the English. The dread of the Papal Interdict was still a reality. Though the clergy of Florence, roused to retaliative fury, might fling back in the teeth of Sixtus such words as *leno matris suæ, adulterorum minister, diaboli vicarius*, yet the people could not long endure 'the niggardly and imperfect rites, the baptism sparingly administered, the extreme unction or the last sacrament coldly vouchsafed to the chosen few, the churchyard closed against the dead,' which, to quote the energetic language of Dean Milman,<sup>26</sup> were the proper fruits of the Papal ban, however unjustly issued and however manfully resisted.

The history of the Despots and the Popes, together with the analysis of Machiavelli's political ethics, prove the demoralisation of a society in which crimes so extravagant could have their origin, and cynicism so deliberate could be accepted as a system. Yet it remains in estimating the general character of Italian morality to record the judgment passed upon it by foreign nations of a different complexion. The morality of races, as of individuals, is rarely otherwise than mixed—virtue balancing vice and evil vitiating goodness. Still the impression produced by Renaissance Italy upon observers from the North was almost wholly bad. Our own ancestors returned from their Italian travels either horrified

<sup>26</sup> *Latin Christianity*, vol. vi. p. 361.

with what they had witnessed, or else contaminated. Ascham writes:<sup>27</sup> 'I was once in Italy myself; but I thank God my abode there was but nine days; and yet I saw in that little time, in one city, more liberty to sin than ever I heard tell of in our noble city of London in nine years. I saw it was there as free to sin, not only without all punishment, but also without any man's marking, as it is free in the City of London to choose without all blame whether a man lust to wear shoe or pantofle.' Robert Greene, who did so much to introduce the novels of Italy into England, confesses that during his youthful travels in the South he 'saw and practised such villany as it is abominable to declare.'<sup>28</sup> The whole of our dramatic literature corroborates these witnesses, while the proverb, *Inglese Italianato è un diavolo incarnato*, quoted by Sidney, Howell, Parker, Ascham, shows how pernicious to the coarser natures of the North were the refined vices of the South. What principally struck our ancestors in the morality of the Italians was the license allowed in sensual indulgences, and the bad faith which tainted all public and private dealings. In respect to the latter point, what has already been said about Machiavelli is enough.<sup>29</sup> Loyalty was a virtue but little esteemed in Italy; engagements seemed made to be broken: even the crime of violence was aggravated by the crime of perfidy, a bravo's stiletto or a slow poison being reckoned among the legitimate means for ridding men of rivals or for revenging a slight. Yet it must not be forgotten that the commercial integrity of the Italians ranked high. In all countries of Europe they carried on the banking business of monarchs, cities, and private persons.

With reference to carnal vice, it cannot be denied that the corruption of Italy was shameful. Putting aside the profligacy of the convents, the city of Rome in 1490 is reported to have held as many as 6,800 public prostitutes, besides those who practised their trade under the cloak of concubinage.<sup>30</sup> These women were accompanied by confederate

<sup>27</sup> *The Schoolmaster*, edn. 1863, p. 87. The whole discourse on Italian travelling and Italian influence is very curious, when we reflect that at this time contact with Italy was forming the chief culture of the English in literature and social manners. The ninth satire in Marston's *Scourge of Villanie* contains much interesting matter on the same point. Howell's *Instructions for forreine travell* furnishes the following illustration: 'And being in Italy, that great limbique of working braines, he must be very circum-spect in his carriage, for she is able to turne a Saint into a devill, and deprave the best natures, if one will abandon himself, and become a prey to dissolute courses and wantonnesse.'

<sup>28</sup> *The Repentance of Robert Greene*, quoted in the memoir to Dyce's edition of his *Dramatic Works*.

<sup>29</sup> See Chapter V.

<sup>30</sup> Infessura, p. 1997. He adds: 'Consideratur modo qualiter vivatur Romæ ubi caput fidei est.' From what Parent Duchâtelet (*Prostitution dans la Ville de Paris*, p. 27) has noted concerning the tendency to exaggerate the numbers of prostitutes in any given town, we have every reason to regard the estimate of Infessura as excessive. In Paris, in 1854, there were only 4,206 registered 'filles publiques,' when the population of the city numbered 1,500,000 persons; while those who exercised their calling clandestinely were variously computed at 20,000 or 40,000 and upwards to 60,000. Accurate statistics relating to the population of any Italian city in the fifteenth century do not, unfortunately, exist.

ruffians, ready to stab, poison, and extort money; thus violence and lust went hand in hand, and to this profligate lower stratum of society may be ascribed the crimes of lawlessness which rendered Rome under Innocent VIII. almost uninhabitable. Venice, praised for its piety by De Comines,<sup>31</sup> was the resort of all the debauchees of Europe who could afford the time and money to visit this modern Corinth. Tom Corvat, the eccentric English traveller, gives a curious account of the splendour and refinement displayed by the demi-monde of the lagoons, and Marston describes Venice as a school of luxury in which the monstrous Aretine played professor.<sup>32</sup> Of the state of morals in Florence Savonarola's sermons give the best picture.

But the characteristic vice of the Italian was not coarse sensuality. He required the fascination of the fancy to be added to the allurements of the senses.<sup>33</sup> It is this which makes the Capitoli of the burlesque poets, of men of note like Berni, La Casa, Varchi, Mauro, Molsa, Dolce, Bembo, Firenzuola, Bronzino, Aretino and de' Medici, so amazing. The crudest forms of debauchery receive the most refined and highly finished treatment in poems which are as remarkable for their wit as for their cynicism. A like vein of elaborate innuendo runs through the 'Canti Carnascialeschi' of Florence, proving that, however profligate the people might have been, they were not contented with grossness unless seasoned with wit. The same excitement of the fancy, playing freely in the lawlessness of sensual self-indulgence and heightening the consciousness of personal force in the agent, rendered the exercise of ingenuity or the avoidance of peril an enhancement of pleasure to the Italians. This is perhaps one of the reasons why all the imaginative compositions of the Renaissance, especially the *Novelle*, turn upon adultery. Judging by the majority of these romances, by the comedies of the time, and by the poetry of Ariosto, we are compelled to believe that such illicit love was merely sensual, and owed its principal attractions to the scope it afforded for whimsical adventures. Yet Bembo's 'Asolani,' Castiglione's panegyric of Platonic Love, and much of the lyrical poetry in vogue warn us to be cautious. The old romantic sentiment expressed by the Florentines of the thirteenth century still survived to some extent, adding a sort of dignity in form at least to these affections.

<sup>31</sup> *Memoirs*, lib. vii. 'C'est la plus triomphante cité que j'ai jamais vue, et qui plus fait d'honneur à ambassadeurs et étrangers, et qui plus sagement se gouverne, et où le service de Dieu est le plus solennellement fait'. The prostitutes of Venice were computed to number 11,654 so far back as the end of the fourteenth century. See Filasi, quoted by Mutinelli in his *Annali urbani di Venezia*.

<sup>32</sup> *Satires*, ii.

<sup>33</sup> Much might be written about the play of the imagination which gave a peculiar complexion to the profligacy, the jealousy, and the vengeance of the Italians. I shall have occasion elsewhere to maintain that in their literature at least the Italians were not a highly imaginative race; nor were they subject to those highly wrought conditions of the brooding fancy, termed by the Northern nations Melancholy, which Dürer has personified in his celebrated etching, and Burton has described in his *Anatomy*. But in their love and hatred, their lust and their cruelty, the Italians required an intellectual element which brought the imaginative faculty into play.



It was due again in a great measure to their demand for imaginative excitement in all matters of the sense, to their desire for the extravagant and extraordinary as a seasoning of pleasure, that the Italians came to deserve so terrible a name among the nations for unnatural passions.<sup>34</sup> This is a subject which can hardly be touched in passing; yet the opinion may be recorded that it belongs rather to the science of psychopathy than to the chronicle of vulgar lusts. English poets have given us the right key to the Italian temperament, on this as on so many other points. Shelley in his portrait of Francesco Cenci has drawn a man in whom cruelty and incest have become appetites of the distempered soul; the love of Giovanni and Annabella in Ford's tragedy is rightly depicted as more imaginative than sensual. It is no excuse for the Italians to say that they had spiritualised abominable vices. What this really means is that their immorality was nearer that of devils than of beasts. But in seeking to distinguish its true character, we must take notice of the highly wrought phantasy which seasoned both their luxury and their jealousy, their vengeance and their lust.

The same is to some extent true of their cruelty. The really cruel nation of the Renaissance was Spain, not Italy.<sup>35</sup> The Italians, as a rule, were gentle and humane, especially in warfare.<sup>36</sup> No Italian army would systematically have tortured the whole population of a captured city day after day for months, as the Spaniards did in Rome and Milan, to satisfy their avarice and glut their stolid appetite for blood. Their respect for human life again was higher than that of the French or Swiss. They gave quarter to their foes upon the battle-field, and were horrified with the massacres in cold blood perpetrated at Fivizzano and Rapallo by the army of Charles VIII. But when the demon

<sup>34</sup> Italian literature is loud-voiced on this topic. The concluding stanzas of Poliziano's *Orfeo*, recited before the Cardinal of Mantua, the Capitoli of Berni, Bronzina, La Casa, and some of the *Canti Carnascialeschi*, might be cited. We might add Varchi's express testimony as to the morals of Filippo Strozzi, Lorenzino de' Medici, Pier Luigi Farnese, and Clement VII. What Segni (lib. x. p. 409) tells us about the brave Giovanni Bandini is also very significant. In the Life of San Bernardino of Siena, Vespasiano (*Vite di Illustri Uomini*, p. 186) writes: 'L'Italia, ch' era piena di queste tenebre, e aveva lasciata ogni norma di buoni costumi, e non era più chi conoscesse Iddio. Tanto erano sommersi e sepulti ne' maladetti e abominevoli vizi nefandi! Gli avevano in modo messi in uso, che non temevano nè Iddio nè l' onore del mondo. Maladetta cecità! In tanto eccesso era venuto ogni cosa, che gli scellerati ed enormi vizi non era più chi gli stimasse, per lo maladetto uso che n' avevano fatto . . . massime il maladetto e abominando e detestando peccato della sodomia. Erano in modo stracorsi in questa recità, che bisognava che l' onnipotente Iddio facesse un' altra volta piovere dal cielo zolfo e fuoco come egli fece a Sodoma e Gomorra.' Compare Savonarola passim, the inductions to the *Sacre Rappresentazioni*, the familiar letters of Machiavelli, and the statute of Cosimo against this vice (year 1542, Sabelli Summa. Venice, 1715; vol. v. p. 287).

<sup>35</sup> Those who wish to gain a lively notion of Spanish cruelty in Italy should read besides the accounts of the Sacco di Roma by Guicciardini and Buonaparte, the narrative of the Sacco di Prato in the *Archivio Storico Italiano*, vol. i., and Cagnola's account of the Spanish occupation of Milan, ib. vol. iii.

<sup>36</sup> De Comines more than once notices the humanity shown by the Italian peasants to the French army.

of cruelty possessed the imagination of an Italian, when, like Gian Maria Visconti, he came to relish the sight of torment for its own sake, or when he sought to inspire fear by the spectacle of pain, then no Spaniard surpassed him in the ingenuity of his devices. In gratifying his thirst for vengeance he was never contented with mere murder. To obtain a personal triumph at the expense of his enemy by the display of superior cunning, by rendering him ridiculous, by exposing him to mental as well as physical anguish, by wounding him through his affections or his sense of honour, was the end which he pursued. This is why so many acts of violence in Italy assumed fantastic forms. Even the country folk showed an infernal art in the execution of their *vendette*. To serve the flesh of children up to their fathers at a meal of courtesy is mentioned, for example, as one mode of wreaking vengeance in country villages. Thus the high culture and æsthetic temperament of the Italians gave an intellectual quality to their vices. Crude lust and bloodshed were insipid to their palates: they required the pungent sauce of a melodramatic catastrophe.

The drunkenness and gluttony of northern nations for a like reason found no favour in Italy. It disgusted the Romans beyond measure to witness the swinish excesses of the Germans. Their own sensuality prompted them to a refined Epicureanism in food and drink; on this point, however, it must be admitted that the prelates, here as elsewhere foremost in profligacy, disgraced the age of Leo with banquets worthy of Vitellius.<sup>37</sup> We trace the same play of the fancy, the same promptitude to quicken and intensify the immediate sense of personality at any cost of after-suffering, in another characteristic vice of the Italians. Gambling among them was carried further and produced more harm than it did in the transalpine cities. This we gather from Savonarola's denunciations, from the animated pictures drawn by Alberti in his 'Trattato della Famiglia' and 'Cena della Famiglia' and also from the inductions to many of the 'Sacre Rappresentazioni'.<sup>38</sup>

Another point which struck a northern visitor in Italy was the frequency of private and domestic murders.<sup>39</sup> The Italians had and deserved a bad reputation for poisoning and assassination. To refer to the deeds of violence in the history of a single family, the Baglioni of Perugia, as recorded by their chronicler Matarazzo; to cite the passages in which Varchi relates the death by poison of Luisa Strozzi, Cardinal Ippolito de' Medici, and Sanga; or to translate the pages of annalists, who describe the palaces of nobles swarming with *bravi*, would be a

<sup>37</sup> See Gregorovius, *Stadt Rom*, vol. viii. p. 225: 'E li cardinali comenzarono a vomitar e cussi li altri,' quoted from Sanudo.

<sup>38</sup> One of the excellent characteristics of Alfonso the Great (Vespasiano, p. 49) was his abhorrence of gambling.

<sup>39</sup> See Guicc. *St. It.* vol. i. p. 101, for the impression produced upon the army of Charles by the murder by poison of Gian Galeazzo Sforza.

very easy task.<sup>40</sup> But the sketch of Benvenuto Cellini's autobiography, which will be found in a subsequent volume, gives so lively a picture of this aspect of Italian life, that there is no reason to enlarge upon the topic now. It is enough to observe that, in their employment of poison and of paid assassins, the Italians were guided by those habits of calculation which distinguished their character.<sup>41</sup> They thought nothing of removing an enemy by craft or violence: but they took no pleasure in murder for its own sake.<sup>42</sup> The object which they had in view prompted them to take a man's life; the mere delight in brawls and bloodshed of Switzers, Germans, and Spaniards offended their taste.

While the imagination played so important a part in the morality of the Italians, it must be remembered that they were deficient in that which is the highest imaginative safeguard against vice, a scrupulous sense of honour. It is true that the Italian authors talk much about *Onore*. Pandolfini tells his sons that *Onore* is one of the qualities which require the greatest thrift in keeping, and Machiavelli asserts that it is almost as dangerous to attack men in their *Onore* as in their property. But when we come to analyse the word, we find that it means something different from that mixture of conscience, pride, and self-respect which makes a man true to a high ideal in all the possible circumstances of life. The Italian *Onore* consisted partly of the credit attaching to public distinctions, and partly of a reputation for *Virtù*, understanding that word in its Machiavellian usage, as force, courage, ability, virility. It was not incompatible with craft and dissimulation, or with the indulgence of sensual vices. Statesmen like Guicciardini, who, by the way, has written a fine paragraph upon the very word in question,<sup>43</sup> did not think it unworthy of their honour to traffic in affairs of state for private profit. Machiavelli not only recommended breaches of political faith, but sacrificed his principles to his pecuniary interests with the Medici. It would be curious to inquire how far the obtuse sensibility of the Italians on this point was due to their freedom

<sup>40</sup> A vivid illustration of the method adopted by hired assassins in tracking and hunting down their victims is presented by Francesco Bibboni's narrative of his murder of Lorenzino dei Medici at Venice. It casts much curious light, moreover, on the relations between paid *bravi* and their employers, the esteem in which professional cut-throats were held, and their connection with the police of the Italian towns. It is published in a tract concerning Lorenzino, Milano, Daelli, 1862.

<sup>41</sup> See the instructions given by the Venetian government to their agents for the purchase of poison and the hiring of secret murderers. See also the Maxims laid down by Sarpi.

<sup>42</sup> This at least was accounted eccentric and barbarous in the extreme. See Pontano, *de Immanitate*, vol. i. p. 326, concerning Niccolo Fortibraccio, Antonio Pontadera, and Riccio Montechiaro, who stabbed and strangled for the pleasure of seeing men die. I have already discussed the blood-madness of some of the Despots.

<sup>43</sup> *Ricordi politici e civili*, No. 118, *Op. Ined.* vol. i.

from vanity.<sup>44</sup> No nation is perhaps less influenced by mere opinion, less inclined to value men by their adventitious advantages: the Italian has the courage and the independence of his personality. It is, however, more important to take notice that Chivalry never took a firm root in Italy; and honour, as distinguished from vanity, amour propre, and credit, draws its life from that ideal of the knightly character which Chivalry established. The true knight was equally sensitive upon the point of honour, in all that concerned the maintenance of an unsullied self, whether he found himself in a king's court or a robber's den. Chivalry, as epitomised in the celebrated oath imposed by Arthur on his peers of the Round Table, was a northern, a Teutonic institution. The sense of honour which formed its very essence was further developed by the social atmosphere of a monarch's court. It became the virtue of the nobly born and chivalrously nurtured, as appears very remarkably in this passage from Rabelais<sup>45</sup> 'En leur reigle n'estroit que ceste clause; Fay ce que voudras. Parce que gens liberes, bien nayz, bien instruitz, conversans en compaignies honnesties, ont par nature ung instinct et aguillon qui toujours les pousse à faitctz vertueux, et retire de vice: lequel ils nommoient honneur.' Now in Italy not only was Chivalry as an institution weak; but the feudal courts in which it produced its fairest flower, the knightly sense of honour, did not exist.<sup>46</sup> Instead of a circle of peers gathered from all quarters of the kingdom round the fount of honour in the person of the sovereign, commercial republics, forceful tyrannies, and the Papal Curia gave the tone to society. In every part of the peninsula rich bankers who bought and sold cities, adventurers who grasped at principalities by violence or intrigue, and priests who sought the aggrandisement of a sacerdotal corporation, were brought together in the meshes of diplomacy. The few noble families which claimed a feudal origin carried on wars for pay by contract in the interest of burghers, popes, or despots. Of these conditions not one was conducive to the sense of honour as conceived in France or England. Taken altogether and in combination, they could not fail to be eminently unfavourable to its development. In such a society Bayard and Sir Walter Manny would have been out of place; the motto *noblesse oblige* would have had but little meaning.<sup>47</sup> Instead of Honour, *Virtù* ruled the world in Italy. The moral atmosphere again

<sup>44</sup> See De Stendhal, *Histoire de la peinture en Italie*, pp. 285-91, for a curious catalogue of examples. The modern sense of honour is based, no doubt, to some extent on a delicate *amour propre*, which makes a man desirous of winning the esteem of his neighbours for its own sake. Granting that conscience, pride, vanity, and self-respect are all constituents of honour, we may, perhaps, find more pride in the Spanish, more *amour propre* in the French, and more conscience in the English.

<sup>45</sup> Gargantua, lib. i. ch. 57.

<sup>46</sup> See, however, what I have already said about Castiglione and his ideal of the courtier in Chapter III. We must remember that he represents a late period of the Renaissance.

<sup>47</sup> It is curious to compare, for example, the part played by Italians, especially by Venice, Pisa, Genoa, Amalfi, as contractors and merchants in the Crusades, with the enthusiasm of the northern nations.

was critical and highly intellectualised. Mental ability combined with personal daring gave rank. But the very subtlety and force of mind which formed the strength of the Italians proved hostile to any delicate sentiment of honour. Analysis enfeebles the tact and spontaneity of feeling which constitute its strongest safeguard. All this is obvious in the ethics of the 'Principe.' What most astounds us in that treatise is the assumption that no man will be bound by laws of honour when utility or the object in view require their sacrifice. In conclusion: although the Italians were not lacking in integrity, honesty, probity, or pride, their positive and highly analytical genius was but little influenced by that chivalrous honour which was an enthusiasm and a religion to the feudal nations, surviving the decay of Chivalry as a preservative instinct more undefinable than absolute morality. Honour with the northern gentry was subjective; with the Italians *Onore* was objective—an addition conferred from without, in the shape of reputation, glory, titles of distinction, or offices of trust.<sup>48</sup>

With the Italian conception of *Onore* we may compare their view of *Onestà* in the female sex. This is set forth plainly by Piccolomini in 'La Bella Creanza delle Donne.'<sup>49</sup> As in the case of *Onore*, we have here to deal, not with an exquisite personal ideal, but with something far more material and external. The *onestà* of a married woman is compatible with secret infidelity, provided she does not expose herself to ridicule and censure by letting her amour be known. Here, again, therefore, the proper translation of the word seems to be credit. Finally, we may allude to the invective against honour which Tasso puts into the mouths of his shepherds in 'Aminta.'<sup>50</sup> Though at this period the influence of France and Spain had communicated to aristocratic society in Italy an exotic sense of honour, yet a court poet dared to condemn it as unworthy of the *Bell' età dell' oro*, because it interfered with pleasure and introduced disagreeable duties into life. Such a tirade would not have been endured in the London of Elizabeth or in the Paris of Louis XIV. Tasso himself, it may be said in passing, was almost feverishly punctilious in matters that touched his reputation.

<sup>48</sup> In confirmation of this view I may call attention to Giannotti's critique of the Florentine constitution (Florence, 1850, vol. i. pp. 15 and 156), and to what Machiavelli says about Gianpaolo Baglioni (*Disc. i. 27*), 'Gli uomini non sanno essere *onorevolmente* tristi;' men know not how to be bad with credit to themselves. The context proves that Gianpaolo failed to win the honour of a signal crime. Compare the use of the word *onore* in Lorenzino de' Medici's *Apologia*.

<sup>49</sup> *La Raffaella, ovvero Della bella Creanza delle Donne* (Milano, Daelli). Compare the statement of the author in his preface, p. 4, where he speaks in his own person, with the definition of *Onore* given by Raffaella, pp. 50 and 51 of the Dialogue: 'L'onore non è riposto in altro, se non nella stimazione appresso agli uomini . . . l'onore della donna non consiste, come t'ho detto, nel fare o non fare, chè questo importa poco, ma nel credersi o non credersi.'

<sup>50</sup> This invective might be paralleled from one of Masuccio's Novelle (ed. Napoli, pp. 389, 390), in which he almost cynically exposes the inconvenience of self-respect and delicacy. The situation of two friends, who agree that honour is a nuisance and share their wives in common, is a favourite of the Novelists.

An important consideration, affecting the whole question of Italian immorality, is this. Whereas the northern races had hitherto remained in a state of comparative poverty and barbarism, distributed through villages and country districts, the people of Italy had enjoyed centuries of wealth and civilisation in great cities. Their towns were the centres of luxurious life. The superfluous income of the rich was spent in pleasure, nor had modern decorum taught them to conceal the vices of advanced culture beneath the cloak of propriety. They were at the same time both indifferent to opinion and self-conscious in a high degree. The very worst of them was seen at a glance and recorded with minute particularity. The depravity of less cultivated races remained unnoticed because no one took the trouble to describe mere barbarism.<sup>51</sup> Vices of the same sort, but less widely dispersed, perhaps, throughout the people, were notorious in Italy, because they were combined with so much that was beautiful and splendid. In a word, the faults of the Italians were such as belong to a highly intellectualised society, as yet but imperfectly penetrated with culture, raised above the brutishness of barbarians, but not advanced to the self-control of civilisation, hampered by the corruption of a Church that trafficked in crime, tainted by uncritical contact with pagan art and literature, and emasculated by political despotism. Their vices, bad as they were in reality, seemed still worse because they attacked the imagination instead of merely exercising the senses. As a correlative to their depravity, we find a sobriety of appetite, a courtesy of behaviour, a mildness and cheerfulness of disposition, a widely diffused refinement of sentiment and manners, a liberal spirit of toleration, which can nowhere else be paralleled in Europe at that period. It was no small mark of superiority to be less ignorant and gross than England, less brutal and stolid than Germany, less rapacious than Switzerland, less cruel than Spain, less vain and inconsequent than France.

Italy again was the land of emancipated individuality. What Mill in his *Essay on Liberty* desired, what seems every day more unattainable in modern life, was enjoyed by the Italians. There was no check to the growth of personality, no grinding of men down to match the average. If great vices emerged more openly than they did elsewhere in Europe, great qualities also had the opportunity of free development in heroes like Ferrucci, in saints like Savonarola, in artists like Michael Angelo. While the social atmosphere of the Papal and despotic courts was unfavourable to the highest type of character, we find at least no external engine of repression, no omnipotent inquisition, no overpowering aristocracy.<sup>52</sup> False political systems and a corrupt Church created a malaria, which poisoned the noble spirits of Machiavelli,

<sup>51</sup> Read, however, the *Saxon Chronicles* or the annals of Ireland in Froude.

<sup>52</sup> I am of course speaking of the Renaissance as distinguished from that new phase of Italian history which followed the Council of Trent and the Spanish despotism.

Ariosto, Guicciardini, Giulano della Rovere. It does not, however, follow therefore that the humanities of the race at large, in spite of superstition and bad government, were vitiated.

We have positive proofs to the contrary in the art of the Italians. The April freshness of Giotto, the piety of Fra Angelico, the virginal purity of the young Raphael, the sweet gravity of John Bellini, the philosophic depth of Da Vinci, the sublime elevation of Michael Angelo, the suavity of Fra Bartolommeo, the delicacy of the Della Robbia, the restrained fervour of Rosellini, the rapture of the Sienese and the reverence of the Umbrian masters, Francia's pathos, Mantegna's dignity, and Luini's divine simplicity, were qualities which belonged not only to these artists but also to the people of Italy from whom they sprang. If men not few of whom were born in cottages and educated in workshops could feel and think in the fashion as they did, we cannot doubt that their mothers and their friends were pure and pious, and that the race which gave them to the world was not depraved. Painting in Italy, it must be remembered, was nearer to the people than literature: it was less a matter of education than instinct, a product of temperament rather than of culture.

Italian art alone suffices to prove to my mind that the immorality of the age descended from the upper stratum of society downwards. Selfish Despots and luxurious priests were the ruin of Italy; and the bad qualities of the princes, secular and ecclesiastical, found expression in the literature of poets and humanists, their parasites. But in what other nation of the fifteenth century can we show the same amount of social urbanity and intellectual light diffused throughout all classes from the highest to the lowest? It is true that the sixteenth century cast a blight upon their lustre. But it was not until Italian taste had been impaired by the vices of Papal Rome and by contact with the Spaniards that the arts became either coarse or sensual. Giulio Romano (1492-1546) and Benvenuto Cellini (1500-70) mark the beginning of the change. In Ribera, a Spaniard, in Caravaggio, and in the whole school of Bologna, it was accomplished. Yet never at any period did the native Italian masters learn to love ugliness with the devotion that reveals innate grossness. It remained for Dürer, Rembrandt, and Hogarth to elevate the grotesque into the region of high art, for Rubens to achieve the apotheosis of pure animalism, for Teniers to devote distinguished genius to the service of the commonplace.

In any review of Italian religion and morality, however fragmentary it may be, as this indeed is, one feature which distinguishes the acute sensibility of the race ought not to be omitted. Deficient in profound intellectual convictions, incapable of a fixed and radical determination towards national holiness, devoid of those passionate and imaginative intuitions into the mysteries of the world which generate religions and philosophies, the Italians were at the same time keenly susceptible to the beauty of the Christian faith revealed to them by inspired orators. What we call Revivalism was an institution in Italy, which the Church



was too wise to discountenance or to suppress, although the preachers of repentance were often insubordinate and sometimes even hostile to the Papal system. The names of Arnold of Brescia, San Bernardino of Siena, John of Vicenza, Jacopo Bussolari, Alberto da Lecce, Giovanni Capistrano, Jacopo della Marca, Girolamo Savonarola, bring before the memory of those who are acquainted with Italian history innumerable pictures of multitudes commoved to tears, of tyrannies destroyed and constitutions founded by tumultuous assemblies, of hostile parties and vindictive nobles locked in fraternal embraces, of cities clothed in sackcloth for their sins, of exhortations to peace echoing by the banks of rivers swollen with blood, of squares and hillsides resonant with sobs, of Lenten nights illuminated with bonfires of Vanity.<sup>53</sup> In the midst of these melodramatic scenes towers the single form of a Dominican or Franciscan friar; while one voice thundering woe or pleading peace dominates the crowd. Of the temporary effects produced by these preachers there can be no question. The changes which they wrought in states and cities prove that the enthusiasm they aroused was more than merely hysterical. Savonarola, the greatest of the class, founded not only a transient commonwealth in Florence, but also a political party of importance, and left his lasting impress on the greatest soul of the sixteenth century in Italy—Michael Angelo Buonarroti. There was a real religious vigour in the people corresponding to the preacher's zeal. But the action of this earnest mood was intermittent and spasmodic. It coexisted with too much superstition and with passions too vehemently restless to form a settled tone of character. In this respect the Italian nation stands not extravagantly pictured in the life of Cellini, whose violence, self-indulgence, keen sense of pleasure, and pagan delight in physical beauty were interrupted at intervals by inexplicable interludes of repentance, Bible-reading, psalm-singing, and visions. To delineate Cellini will be the business of a distant chapter. The form of the greatest of Italian preachers must occupy the foreground of the next.

Before closing the imperfect and scattered notices collected in this chapter, it will be well to attempt some recapitulation of the points already suggested. Without committing ourselves to the dogmatism of a theory, we are led to certain general conclusions on the subject of Italian society in the sixteenth century. The fierce party quarrels which closed the Middle Ages had accustomed the population to violence, and this violence survived in the too frequent occurrence of brutal crimes. The artificial sovereignty of the Despots being grounded upon perfidy, it followed that guile and fraud came to be recognised in private no less than public life. With the emergence of the bourgeois classes a self-satisfied positivism, vividly portrayed in the person of Cosimo de' Medici, superseded the passions and enthusiasms of a previous age.

<sup>53</sup> I have thrown into an appendix some of the principal passages from the chronicles about revivals in mediæval Italy.

Thus force, craft and practical materialism formed the basis of Italian immorality. Vehement contention in the sphere of politics, restless speculation, together with the loosening of every tie that bound society together in the Middle Ages, emancipated personality and substituted the freedom of self-centred vigour and virility (*Virtù*) for the prescriptions of civil or religious order. In the nation that had shaken off both Papal and Imperial authority no conception of law remained to control caprice. Instead of law, men obeyed the instincts of their several characters, swayed by artistic taste or tyrannous appetite, or by the splendid heroism of extinct antiquity. The Church had alienated the people from true piety. Yet no new form of religious belief arose; and partly through respect for the past, partly through the convenience of clinging to existing institutions, Catholicism was indulgently tolerated. At the same time the humanists introduced an ideal antagonistic to Christianity of the monastic type. Without abruptly severing themselves from the communion of the Church, and while in form at least observing all its ordinances, they thought, wrote, spoke, felt, and acted like Pagans. To the hypocrisies of obsolete asceticism were added the affectations of anachronistic license. Meanwhile, the national genius for art attained its fullest development, simultaneously with the decay of faith, the extinction of political liberty, and the anarchy of ethics. So strong was the æsthetic impulse that it seemed for a while capable of drawing all the forces of the nation to itself. A society that rested upon force and fraud, corroded with cynicism, cankered with hypocrisy, recognising no standard apart from success in action and beauty in form, so conscious of its own corruption that it produced no satirist among the many who laughed lightly at its vices, wore the external aspect of exquisite refinement, and was delicately sensitive to every discord. Those who understood the contradictions of the age most deeply were the least capable of rising above them. Consequently we obtain in Machiavelli's works the ideal picture of personal character, moving to calculated ends by scientifically selected means, none of which are sanctioned by the unwritten code of law that governs human progress. Cosimo's positivism is reduced to theory. Fraud becomes a rule of conduct. Force is advocated, when the dagger or the poisoned draught or the extermination of a city may lead the individual straight forward to his object. Religion is shown to be a political engine. Hypocrisy is a mask that must be worn. The sanctities of ancient use and custom controlling appetite have no place assigned them in the system. Action is analysed as a branch of the fine arts; and the spirit of the age, of which the philosopher makes himself the hierophant, compels him to portray it as a sinister and evil art.

In the civilisation of Italy, carried prematurely beyond the conditions of the Middle Ages, before the institutions of mediævalism had been destroyed or its prejudices had been overcome, we everywhere discern the want of a co-ordinating principle. The old religion has died; but there is no new faith. The Communes have been proved inadequate;

but there is no nationality. Practical positivism has obliterated the virtues of a chivalrous and feudal past; but science has not yet been born. Scholarship floods the world with the learning of antiquity; but this knowledge is still undigested. Art triumphs; but the æsthetic instinct has invaded the regions of politics and ethics, owing to defective analysis in theory, and in practice to over-confident reliance on personal ability. The individual has attained to freedom; but he has not learned the necessity of submitting his volition to law. At all points the development of the Italians strikes us as precocious, with the weakness of precocity scarcely distinguishable from the decay of old age. A transition from the point attained in the Renaissance to some firmer and more solid ground was imperatively demanded. But the fatality of events precluded the Italians from making it. Their evolution, checked in mid-career by the brilliant ambition of France and the cautious reactionary despotism of Spain, remained suspended. Students are left, face to face with the sixteenth century, to decipher an inscription that lacks its leading verb, to puzzle over a riddle whereof the solution is hidden from us by the ruin of a people. It must ever be an undecided question whether the Italians, undisturbed by foreign interference, could have passed beyond the artificial and exceptional stage of the Renaissance to a sounder and more substantial phase of national vitality; or whether, as their inner conscience seems to have assured them, their disengagement from moral obligation and their mental ferment foreboded an inevitable catastrophe.

## CHAPTER IX

### SAVONAROLA

*The Attitude of Savonarola toward the Renaissance—His Parentage, Birth, and Childhood at Ferrara—His Poem on the Ruin of the World—Joins the Dominicans at Bologna—Letter to his Father—Poem on the Ruin of the Church—Begins to preach in 1482—First Visit to Florence—San Gimignano—His Prophecy—Brescia in 1486—Personal Appearance and Style of Oratory—Effect on his Audience—The three Conclusions—His Visions—Savonarola's Shortcomings as a patriotic Statesman—His sincere Belief in his Prophetic Calling—Friendship with Pico della Mirandola—Settles in Florence, 1490—Convent of San Marco—Savonarola's Relation to Lorenzo de' Medici—The Death of Lorenzo—Sermons of 1493 and 1494—The Constitution of 1495—Theocracy in Florence—Piagnoni, Bigi, and Arrabbiati—War between Savonarola and Alexander VI.—The Signory suspends him from preaching in the Duomo in 1498—Attempts to call a Council—The Ordeal by Fire—San Marco stormed by the Mob—Trial and Execution of Savonarola.*

NOTHING is more characteristic of the sharp contrasts of the Italian Renaissance than the emergence not only from the same society, but also from the bosom of the same Church, of two men so diverse as the Pope Alexander VI. and the Prophet Girolamo Savonarola. Savonarola has been claimed as a precursor of the Lutheran Reformers, and as an inspired exponent of the spirit of the fifteenth century. In reality he neither shared the revolutionary genius of Luther, which gave a new vitality to the faiths of Christendom, nor did he sympathise with that free movement of the modern mind which found its first expression in the arts and humanistic studies of Renaissance Italy. Both toward Renaissance and Reform he preserved the attitude of a monk, showing on the one hand an austere mistrust of pagan culture, and on the other no desire to alter either the creeds or the traditions of the Romish Church. Yet the history of Savonarola is not to be dissociated from that of the Italian Renaissance. He more clearly than any other man discerned the moral and political situation of his country. When all the states of Italy seemed sunk in peace and cradled in prosperity, he predicted war, and felt the imminence of overwhelming calamity. The purification of customs which he preached was demanded by the flagrant vices of the Popes and by the wickedness of the tyrants. The scourge which he prophesied did in fact descend upon Italy. In addition to this clairvoyance, by right of which we call him prophet, the hold he took on Florence at a critical moment of Italian history is alone enough to entitle him to more than merely passing notice.

Girolamo Savonarola was born at Ferrara in 1452.<sup>1</sup> His grandfather Michele, a Paduan of noble family, had removed to the capital of the Este princes at the beginning of the fifteenth century. There he held the office of court physician; and Girolamo was intended for the same profession. But early in his boyhood the future prophet showed signs of disinclination for a worldly life, and an invincible dislike of the court. Under the House of Este, Ferrara was famous throughout Italy for its gaiety and splendour. No city enjoyed more brilliant and more frequent public shows. Nowhere did the aristocracy maintain so much of feudal magnificence and chivalrous enjoyment. The square castle of red brick, which still stands in the middle of the town, was thronged with poets, players, fools who enjoyed an almost European reputation, court flatterers, knights, pages, scholars, and fair ladies. But beneath its cube of solid masonry, on a level with the moat, shut out from daylight by a sevenfold series of iron bars, lay dungeons in which the objects of the Duke's displeasure clanked chains and sighed their lives away.<sup>2</sup> Within the precincts of this palace the young Savonarola learned to hate alike the worldly vices and the despotic cruelty against which in after-life he prophesied and fought unto the death.

Of his boyhood we know but little. His biographers only tell us that he was grave and solitary, frequenting churches, praying with passionate persistence, obstinately refusing, though otherwise docile, to join his father in his visits to the court. Aristotle and S. Thomas Aquinas seem to have been the favourite masters of his study. In fact he refused the new lights of the humanists, and adhered to the ecclesiastical training of the schoolmen. Already at the age of twenty we find him composing a poem in Italian on the Ruin of the World, in which he cries: 'The whole world is in confusion; all virtue is extinguished, and all good manners; I find no living light abroad, nor one who blushes for his vices.' His point of departure had been taken, and the keynote of his life had been struck. The sense of intolerable sin that came upon him in Ferrara haunted him through manhood, set his hand against the Popes and Despots of Italy, and gave peculiar tone to his prophetic utterances.

The attractions of the cloister, as a refuge from the storms of the world, and as a rest from the torments of the sins of others, now began to sway his mind.<sup>3</sup> But he communicated his desire to no one. It would have grieved his father and his mother to find that their son, who was, they hoped, to be a shining light at the court of Ferrara, had

<sup>1</sup> In this chapter on Savonarola I have made use of Villari's *Life* (translated by Leonard Horner, Longmans, 1863, 2 vols.), Michelet's *Histoire de France*, vol. vii., Milman's article on Savonarola (John Murray, 1870), Nardi's *Istoria Fiorentina*, book ii., and the *Memoirs* of De Comines.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 213.

<sup>3</sup> Often in later life Savonarola cried that he had sought the cloister to find rest, but that God had chosen, instead of bringing him into calm waters, to cast him on a tempest-swollen sea. See the Sermon quoted by Villari, vol. i. p. 298.

determined to assume the cowl. At length, however, came the time at which he felt that leave the world he must. 'It was on the 23rd of April, 1475,' says Villari; 'he was sitting with his lute and playing a sad melody; his mother, as if moved by a spirit of divination, turned suddenly round to him, and exclaimed mournfully, My son, that is a sign we are soon to part. He roused himself, and continued, but with a trembling hand, to touch the strings of the lute, without raising his eyes from the ground.' This would make a picture; spring twilight in the quaint Italian room, with perhaps a branch of fig-tree or of bay across the open window; the mother looking up with anxious face from her needlework; the youth, dressed almost for the last time in secular attire, with those terrible eyes and tense lips and dilated nostrils of the future prophet, not yet worn by years of care, but strongly marked and unmistakable, bending over the melancholy chords of the lute.

On the very next day Girolamo left Ferrara in secret and journeyed to Bologna. There he entered the order of S. Dominic, the order of the Preachers, the order of his master S. Thomas, the order too, let us remember, of inquisitorial crusades. The letter written to his father after taking this step is memorable. In it he says: 'The motives by which I have been led to enter into a religious life are these: the great misery of the world; the iniquities of men, their rapes, adulteries, robberies, their pride, idolatry, and fearful blasphemies: so that things have come to such a pass that no one can be found acting righteously. Many times a day have I repeated with tears the verse:

Heu, fuge crudelas terras, fuge littus avarum!

I could not endure the enormous wickedness of the blinded people of Italy; and the more so because I saw everywhere virtue despised and vice honoured.' We see clearly that Savonarola's vocation took its origin in a deep sense of the wickedness of the world. It was the same spirit as that which drove the early Christians of Alexandria into the Thebaid. Austere and haggard, consumed with the zeal of the Lord, he had moved long enough among the Ferrarese holiday-makers. Those elegant young men in tight hose and particoloured jackets, with oaths upon their lips and deeds of violence and lust within their hearts, were no associates for him. It is touching, however, to note that no text of Ezekiel or Jeremiah, but Virgil's musical hexameter, sounded through his soul the warning to depart.

In this year Savonarola composed another poem: this time on the Ruin of the Church. In his boyhood he had witnessed the pompous shows which greeted Æneas Sylvius, more like a Roman general than a new-made Pope, on his entrance into Ferrara. Since then he had seen the monster Sixtus mount the Papal throne. No wonder if he, who had fled from the world to the Church for purity and peace, should need to vent his passion in a song. 'Where,' he cries, 'are the doctors of old times, the saints, the learning, charity, chastity of the past?' The Church answers by displaying her rent raiment and wounded body, and

by pointing to the cavern in which she has to make her home. 'Who,' exclaims the poet, 'has wrought this wrong?' *Una fallace, superba meretrice*—Rome! Then indeed the passion of the novice breaks in fire:—

Deh! per Dio, donna,  
Se romper si potria quelle grandi ale!

The Church replies:—

Tu piangi e taci: e questo meglio parmi.

No other answer could be given to Savonarola's impatient yearnings even by his own hot heart, while he yet remained a young and unknown monk in Bologna. Nor, strive as he might strive through all his life, was it granted him to break those outspread wings of arrogant Rome.

The career of Savonarola as a preacher began in 1482, when he was sent first to Ferrara and then to Florence on missions by his superiors. But at neither place did he find acceptance. A prophet has no honour in his own country; and for pagan-hearted Florence, though destined to be the theatre of his life-drama, Savonarola had as yet no thundrous burden of invective to utter. Besides, his voice was sharp and thin; his face and person were not prepossessing. The style of his discourse was adapted to cloistral disputations, and overloaded with scholastic distinctions. The great orator had not yet arisen in him. The friar, with all his dryness and severity, was but too apparent. With what strange feelings must the youth have trodden the streets of Florence! In after-days he used to say he foreknew those streets and squares were destined to be the scene of his labours. But then, voiceless, powerless, without control of his own genius, without the consciousness of his prophetic mission, he brooded alone and out of harmony with the beautiful and mundane city. The charm of the hills and gardens of Valdarno, the loveliness of Giotto's tower, the amplitude of Brunelleschi's dome—these may have sunk deep into his soul. And the subtle temper of the Florentine intellect must have attracted his own keen spirit by a secret sympathy. For Florence ere long became the city of his love, the first-born of his yearnings.

In the cloisters of San Marco, enriched with splendid libraries by the liberality of the Medicean princes, he was at peace. The walls of that convent had recently been decorated with frescoes by Fra Angelico, even as a man might crowd the leaves of a missal with illuminations. Among these Savonarola meditated and was happy. But in the pulpit and in contact with the holiday folk of Florence he was ill at ease. Lorenzo de' Medici overshadowed the whole city. Lorenzo, in whom the pagan spirit of the Renaissance, the spirit of free culture, found a proper incarnation, was the very opposite of Savonarola, who had already judged the classical revival by its fruits, and had conceived a spiritual resurrection for his country. At Florence, a passionate love of art and learning—the enthusiasm which prompted men to spend their fortunes upon MSS. and statues, the sensibility to beauty which produced the master-



works of Donatello and Ghiberti, the thirst for knowledge which burned in Pico and Poliziano and Ficino—existed side by side with impudent immorality, religious deadness, cold contempt for truth, and cynical admiration of successful villainy. Both the good and the evil which flourished on this fertile soil so luxuriantly were combined in the versatile genius of the merchant prince, whose policy it was to stifle freedom by caressing the follies, vices, and intellectual tastes of his people.

The young Savonarola was as yet no match for Lorenzo. And whither could he look for help? The reform of morals he so ardently desired was not to be expected from the Church. Florence well knew that Sixtus had plotted to murder the Medici before the altar at the moment of the elevation of the Host. Excommunicated for a deed of justice after the failure of this Popish plot, the city had long been at war with the pontiff. If anywhere it was in the cells of the philosophers, in that retreat where Ficino burned his lamp to Plato, in that hall where the Academy crowned their master's bust with laurels, that the more sober-minded citizens found ghostly comfort and advice. But from this philosophy the fervent soul of Savonarola turned with no less loathing, and with more contempt, than from the Canti Carnascialeschi and Aristophanic pageants of Lorenzo, which made Florence at Carnival time affect the fashions of Athens during the Dionysia. It is true that Italy owed much to the elevated theism developed by Platonic students. While the humanists were exalting pagan license, and while the Church was teaching the worst kinds of immorality, the philosophers kept alive in cultivated minds a sense of God.

But the monk, nourished on the Bible and S. Thomas, valued this confusion of spirits and creeds in a chaos of indiscriminate erudition at a small price. He had the courage in the fifteenth century at Florence to proclaim that the philosophers were in hell, and that an old woman knew more of saving faith than Plato. Savonarola and Lorenzo were opposed as champions of two hostile principles alike emergent from the very life of the Renaissance: paganism reborn in the one, the spirit of the gospel in the other. Both were essentially modern; for it was the function of the Renaissance to restore to the soul of man its double heritage of the classic past and Christian liberty, freeing it from the fetters which the Middle Ages had forged. Not yet, however, were Lorenzo and Savonarola destined to clash. The obscure friar at this time was preaching to an audience of some thirty persons in San Lorenzo, while Poliziano and all the fashion of the town crowded to the sermons of Fra Mariano da Genazzano in Santo Spirito. This man flattered the taste of the moment by composing orations on the model of Ficino's addresses to the Academy, and by complimenting Christianity upon its similarity to Platonism. Who could then have guessed that beneath the cowl of the harsh-voiced Dominican, his rival, burned thoughts that in a few years would inflame Florence with a conflagration powerful enough to destroy the fabric of the Medicean despotism?

From Florence, where he had met with no success, Savonarola was

sent to San Gemignano, a little town on the top of a high hill between Florence and Siena. We now visit San Gemignano in order to study some fading frescoes of Gozzoli and Ghirlandajo, or else for the sake of its strange feudal towers, tall pillars of brown stone, crowded together within the narrow circle of the town walls. Very beautiful is the prospect from these ramparts on a spring morning, when the song of the nightingales and the scent of acacia flowers ascend together from the groves upon the slopes beneath. The grey Tuscan landscape for scores and scores of miles all round melts into blueness, like the blueness of the sky, flecked here and there with wandering cloud-shadows. Let those who pace the grass-grown streets of the hushed city remember that here the first flash of authentic genius kindled in Savonarola's soul. Here for the first time he prophesied: 'The church will be scourged, then regenerated, and this quickly.' These are the celebrated three conclusions, the three points to which Savonarola in all his prophetic utterances adhered.

But not yet had he fully entered on his vocation. His voice was weak; his style uncertain; his soul, we may believe, still wavering between strange dread and awful joy, as he beheld, through many a backward rolling mist of doubt, the mantle of the prophets descend upon him. Already he had abandoned the schoolmen for the Bible. Already he had learned by heart each verse of the Old and New Testaments. Pondering on their texts, he had discovered four separate interpretations for every suggestion of Sacred Writ. For some of the pregnant utterances of the prophets he found hundreds, pouring forth metaphor and illustration in wild and dazzling profusion of audacious, uncouth imagery. The flame which began to smoulder in him at San Gemignano burst forth into a blaze at Brescia, in 1486. Savonarola was now aged thirty-four. 'Midway upon the path of life' he opened the Book of Revelation: he figured to the people of Brescia the four-and-twenty elders rising to denounce the sins of Italy, and to declare the calamities that must ensue. He pictured to them their city flowing with blood. His voice, which now became the interpreter of his soul, in its resonance and earnestness and piercing shrillness, thrilled his hearers with strange terror. Already they believed his prophecy; and twenty-six years later, when the soldiers of Gaston de Foix slaughtered six thousand souls in the streets of Brescia, her citizens recalled the Apocalyptic warnings of the Dominican monk.

As Savonarola is now launched upon his vocation of prophecy, this is the right moment to describe his personal appearance and his style of preaching. We have abundant material for judging what his features were, and how they flashed beneath the storm of inspiration.<sup>4</sup> Fra Bartolommeo, one of his followers, painted a profile of him in the character of S. Peter Martyr. This shows all the benignity and grace of

<sup>4</sup> Engravings of the several portraits may be seen in Harford's *Life of Michael Angelo Buonarroti* (Longmans, 1857, vol. i.), and also in Villari.

expression which his stern lineaments could assume. It is a picture of the sweet and gentle nature latent within the fiery arraigner of his nation at the bar of God. In contemporary medals the face appears hard, keen, uncompromising, beneath its heavy cowl. But the noblest portrait is an intaglio engraved by Giovanni della Corniole, now to be seen in the Uffizzi at Florence. Of this work Michael Angelo, himself a disciple of Savonarola, said that art could go no further. We are therefore justified in assuming that the engraver has not only represented faithfully the outline of Savonarola's face, but has also indicated his peculiar expression. A thick hood covers the whole head and shoulders. Beneath it can be traced the curve of a long and somewhat flat skull, rounded into extraordinary fulness at the base and side. From a deeply sunken eye-socket emerges, scarcely seen, but powerfully felt, the eye that blazed with lightning. The nose is strong, prominent, and aquiline, with wide nostrils, capable of terrible dilation under the stress of vehement emotion. The mouth has full, compressed, projecting lips. It is large, as if made for a torrent of eloquence: it is supplied with massive muscles, as if to move with energy and calculated force and utterance. The jawbone is hard and heavy; the cheek-bone emergent: between the two the flesh is hollowed, not so much with the emaciation of monastic vigils as with the athletic exercise of wrestlers in the throes of prophecy. The face, on the whole, is ugly, but not repellent; and, in spite of its great strength, it shows signs of feminine sensibility. Like the faces of Cicero and Demosthenes, it seems the fit machine for oratory. But the furnaces hidden away behind that skull, beneath that cowl, have made it haggard with a fire not to be found in the serener features of the classic orators. Savonarola was a visionary and a monk. The discipline of the cloister left its trace upon him. The wings of dreams have winnowed and withered that cheek as they passed over it. The spirit of prayer quivers upon those eager lips. The colour of Savonarola's flesh was brown: his nerves were exquisitely sensitive yet strong; like a network of wrought steel, elastic, easily overstrained, they recovered their tone and temper less by repose than by the evolution of fresh electricity. With Savonarola fasts were succeeded by trances, and trances by tempests of vehement improvisation. From the midst of such profound debility that he could scarcely crawl up the pulpit steps, he would pass suddenly into the plenitude of power, filling the Dome of Florence with denunciations, sustaining his discourse by no mere trick of rhetoric that flows to waste upon the lips of shallow preachers, but marshalling the phalanx of embattled arguments and pointed illustrations, pouring his thought forth in columns of continuous flame, mingling figures of sublimest imagery with reasonings of severest accuracy, at one time melting his audience to tears, at another freezing them with terror, again quickening their souls with prayers and pleadings and blessings that had in them the sweetness of the very spirit of Christ. His sermons began with scholastic exposition; as they advanced, the ecstasy of inspiration fell upon the preacher, till the

sympathies of the whole people of Florence gathered round him,<sup>5</sup> met, and attained, as it were, to single consciousness in him. He then no longer restrained the impulse of his oratory, but became the mouthpiece of God, the interpreter to themselves of all that host. In a fiery crescendo, never flagging, never losing firmness of grasp or lucidity of vision, he ascended the altar steps of prophecy, and, standing like Moses on the mount between the thunders of God and the tabernacles of the plain, fulminated period after period of impassioned eloquence. The walls of the church re-echoed with sobs and wailings dominated by one ringing voice. The scribe to whom we owe the fragments of these sermons, at times breaks off with these words: 'Here I was so overcome with weeping that I could not go on.' Pico della Mirandola tells us that the mere sound of Savonarola's voice, startling the stillness of the Duomo, thronged through all its space with people, was like a clap of doom: a cold shiver ran through the marrow of his bones, the hairs of his head stood on end, as he listened. Another witness reports: 'These sermons caused such terror, alarm, sobbing, and tears that everyone passed through the streets without speaking, more dead than alive.'

Such was the preacher: and such was the effect of his oratory. The theme on which he loved to dwell was this. Repent! A judgment of God is at hand. A sword is suspended over you. Italy is doomed for her iniquity—for the sins of the Church, whose adulteries have filled the world—for the sins of the tyrants, who encourage crime and trample upon souls—for the sins of you people, you fathers and mothers, you young men, you maidens, you children that list blasphemy! Nor did Savonarola deal in generalities. He described in plain language every vice; he laid bare every abuse; so that a mirror was held up to the souls of his hearers, in which they saw their most secret faults appallingly portrayed and ringed around with fire. He entered with particularity into the details of the coming woes. One by one he enumerated the bloodshed, the ruin of cities, the trampling down of provinces, the passage of armies, the desolating wars that were about to fall on Italy.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Nardi, in his *Istorie di Firenze* (lib. ii. cap. 16); describes the crowd assembled in the Duomo to hear Savonarola preach: 'Per la moltitudine degli uditori non essendo quasi bastante la chiesa cattedrale di santa Maria del Fiore, ancora che molto grande e capace sia, fu necessario edificar dentro lungo i paretì di quella, dirimpetto al pergamo, certi gradi di legname rilevati con ordine di sederi, a guisa di teatro, e così dalla parte di sopra all'entrata del coro e dalla parte di sotto in verso le porte della detta chiesa.'

<sup>6</sup> Savonarola's whole view of the situation and of the perils of Italy was that of a prophet. He saw more clearly than other people what was inevitable. But his disciples and the vulgar believed implicitly in his prophetic gift in the narrower sense, that is, in his power to predict events, such as the deaths of Lorenzo and the King of Naples, the punishment of Charles VIII. in the loss of the dauphin, &c. Pico says: 'Savonarola could read the future as clearly as one sees the whole is greater than the part.' And there is no doubt that, as time went on, Savonarola himself came to believe that he possessed this faculty. After his trial and execution a very uncomfortable sense of doubt remained upon the minds of those who had been witnesses of his life-drama. Upon this topic Guicciardini, *Stor. Fior.*, *Op. Ined.* vol. iii. p. 179; Nardi, *Stor. Fior.* lib. ii. caps. 16 and 36, may be read with advantage.

You may read pages of his sermons which seem like vivid narratives of what afterwards took place in the sack of Prato, in the storming of Brescia, in the battle of the Ronco, in the cavern-massacre of Vicenza. No wonder that he stirred his audience to their centre. The hell within them was revealed. The coming doom above them was made manifest. Ezekiel and Jeremiah were not more prophetic. John crying to a generation of vipers, 'Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!' was not more weighty with the mission of authentic inspiration.

'I began'—Savonarola himself writes with reference to a course of sermons delivered in 1491—'I began publicly to expound the Revelation in our Church of S. Mark. During the course of the year I continued to develop to the Florentines these three propositions: That the Church would be renewed in our time; that before that renovation God would strike all Italy with a fearful chastisement; that these things would happen shortly.' It is by right of the foresight of a new age contained in these three famous so-called conclusions that Savonarola deserves to be named the Prophet of the Renaissance. He was no apostle of reform: it did not occur to him to reconstruct the creed, to dispute the discipline, or to criticise the authority of the Church. He was no founder of a new order: unlike his predecessors, Dominic and Francis, he never attempted to organise a society of saints or preachers; unlike his successors, Caraffa the Theatine and Loyola the Jesuit, he enrolled no militia for the defence of the faith, constructed no machinery for education. Starting with simple horror at the wickedness of the world, he had recourse to the old prophets. He steeped himself in Bible studies. He caught the language of Malachi and Jeremiah. He became convinced that for the wickedness of Italy a judgment was imminent. From that conclusion he rose upon the wings of faith to the belief that a new age would dawn. The originality of his intuition consisted in this, that while Italy was asleep, and no man trembled for the future, he alone felt that the stillness of the air was fraught with thunder, that its tranquillity was like that which precedes a tempest blown from the very nostrils of the God of Hosts.

To the astonishment of his hearers, and perhaps also of himself, his prophecies began to fulfil themselves. Within three years after his first sermon in S. Mark's, Charles VIII. had entered Italy, Lorenzo de' Medici was dead, and politicians no less than mystics felt that a new chapter had been opened in the book of the world's history. The Reform of the Church was also destined to follow. What Savonarola had foreseen, here too happened; but not in the way he would have wished, nor by the means he would have used. It is one thing to be a prophet in the sense of discerning the catastrophe to which circumstances must inevitably lead, another thing to trace beforehand the path which will be taken by the hurricanes that change the face of the world. Remaining in his soul a monk, attached by education and by natural sympathy to the past rather than the future, he felt in spite of himself the spirit of the coming age. Had he lived but one century earlier, we should not

have called him prophet. It was the Renaissance which set the seal of truth upon his utterances. Yet in his vision of the world to be, he was like Balaam prophesying blindly of a star.

Sixtus IV. had died and been succeeded by Innocent VIII. Innocent had given place to Alexander. The very nadir of the abyss had been reached. Then Savonarola saw a vision and heard a voice: *Ecce gladius Domini super terram cito et velociter*. The sword turned earthward; the air was darkened with fiery sleet and arrows; thunders rolled; the world was filled with pestilences, wars, famines. At another time he dreamed and looked toward Rome. From the Eternal City there rose a black cross, reaching to heaven, and on it was inscribed *Crux iræ Dei*. Then too the skies were troubled; clouds rushed through the air discharging darts and fire and swords, and multitudes below were dying. These visions he published in sermons and in print. Pictures were made from them. They and the three conclusions went abroad through Italy. Again, Charles was preparing for his expedition. Savonarola took the Ark of Noah for his theme. The deluge was at hand; he bade his hearers enter the ship of refuge before the terrible and mighty nation came: 'O Italy! O Rome! I give you over to the hands of a people who will wipe you out from among the nations! I see them descending like lions. Pestilence comes marching hand in hand with war. The deaths will be so many that the buriers shall go through the streets crying out: Who hath dead, who hath dead? and one will bring his father, and another his son. O Rome! I cry again to you repent! Repent, Venice! Milan, repent!' 'The prophets a hundred years ago proclaimed to you the flagellation of the Church. For five years I have been announcing it: and now again I cry to you. The Lord is full of wrath. The angels on their knees cry to Him: Strike, strike! The good sob and groan: We can no more. The orphans, the widows say: We are devoured, we cannot go on living. All the Church triumphant hath cried to Christ: Thou diedst in vain. It is heaven which is in combat. The saints of Italy, the angels, are leagued with the barbarians. Those who called them in have put the saddles to the horses. Italy is in confusion, saith the Lord; this time she shall be yours. And the Lord cometh above his Saints, above the blessed ones who march in battle-array, who are drawn up in squadrons. Whither are they bound? S. Peter is for Rome, crying: To Rome, to Rome! and S. Paul and S. Gregory march, crying: To Rome! And behind them go the sword, the pestilence, the famine. S. John cries: Up, up, to Florence! And the plague follows him. S. Anthony cries: Ho for Lombardy! S. Mark cries: Haste we to the city that is throned upon the waters! And all the angels of heaven, sword in hand, and all the celestial consistory, march on unto this war.'

Then he speaks of his own fate: 'What shall be the end of our war, you ask? If this be a general question, I shall answer Victory! If you ask it of myself in particular, I answer, Death, or to be hewn in pieces. This is our faith, this is our guerdon, this is our reward! We ask for

no more than this. But when you see me dead, be not then troubled. All those who have prophesied have suffered and been slain. To make my word prevail, there is needed the blood of many.<sup>7</sup>

These are the prophecies with which Savonarola anticipated the coming of a foreign conqueror. It is interesting to trace in his apostrophes the double feeling of the prophet. Desire for the advent of Charles as a Messiah, liberator, and purifier of the Church, contends with an instinctive horror of the barbarian. Savonarola, like Dante, like all Italian patriots, except only Machiavelli, who too late had been lessoned by bitter experience to put no trust in foreign princes, could not refrain from hoping even against hope that good might come from beyond the Alps. Yet when the foreigners appeared, he trembled at the violence they wrought upon the ancient liberties of Italy. Savonarola's chief shortcoming as a patriot consisted in this, that he strengthened the old folly of the Florentines in leaning upon strangers.<sup>7</sup> Had he taught the Italians to work out their self-regeneration from within, instead of preparing them to accept an alien's yoke, he would have won a far more lasting meed of fame. As it was, together with the passion for liberty which became a religion with his followers, he strove to revive the obsolete tactics of an earlier age, and bequeathed to Florence the weak policy of waiting upon France. This legacy bore bitter fruits in the next century. If it was the memory of the Friar which nerved the citizens of Florence to sustain the siege of 1528, the same memory bound them to seek aid from inconsequent Francis, and to hope that at the last moment a cohort of seraphim would defend their walls.<sup>8</sup>

That Savonarola believed in his own prophecies there is no doubt. They were in fact, as I have already tried to show, a view of the political and moral situation of Italy, expressed with the force of profound religious conviction and based upon a theory of the divine government of the world. But how far he allowed himself to be guided by visions and by words uttered to his soul in trance, is a somewhat different question. It is just at this point that a man possessed of acute insight and trusting to the truth of his instincts may be tempted under strong devotional excitement to pass the border land which separates healthy intuition from hallucination. If Savonarola's studies of the Hebrew prophets inclined him to believe in dreams and revelations, yet on the other hand the strong logic of his intellect, trained in scholastic distinctions, taught him to mistrust the promptings of a power that spoke to him when he was somewhat more or less than his prosaic self. How could he be sure that the spirit came from God? We know for certain that he struggled against the impulse of divination and refused at times to obey it. But it overcame him. Like the Cassandra of Æschylus, he panted in the grasp of one mightier than himself. 'An inward fire,' he

<sup>7</sup> Segni, *Ist. Fior.* lib. i. p. 23, records a saying of Savonarola's, *Gigli con gigli dover fiorire*, as one of the causes of the obstinate French partiality of the Florentines in 1529.

<sup>8</sup> See Varchi, Segni, and Nardi, who agree on these points.



cried, 'consumes my bones and forces me to speak out.' And again: 'I have, O Lord, burnt my wings of contemplation, and I have launched into a tempestuous sea, where I have found contrary winds in every quarter. I wished to reach a harbour, but could not find the way thither; I wished to lay me down, but could meet with no resting-place. I longed to be silent and to utter not a word. But the word of the Lord is in my heart; and if it does not come forth, it must consume the marrow of my bones. Thus, O Lord, if it be Thy will that I should navigate in deep waters, Thy will be done.'

At another time he says: 'I remember well that upon one occasion, in the year 1491, when I was preaching in the Duomo, having composed my sermon entirely upon these visions, I determined to abstain from all allusion to them, and in future to adhere to this resolution. God is my witness that the whole of Saturday and the whole of the succeeding night I lay awake, and could see no other course, no other doctrine. At daybreak, worn out and depressed by the many hours I had lain awake, while I was praying, I heard a voice that said to me: "Fool that thou art, dost thou not see that it is God's will that thou shouldst keep to the same path?" The consequence of which was that on the same day I preached a tremendous sermon.'

These passages leave upon the mind no doubt of Savonarola's sincerity. If he deceived others, he was himself the first to be deceived, and that too not before he had subjected himself to the most searching examination, seeking in vain to escape from the force which compelled him to play the part of prophet. Terrible, indeed, must have been the wrastlings and the questionings of this strong-fibred intellect, alone and diffident, within the toils of ecstasy.

Returning to the details of Savonarola's biography, we find him still in Lombardy in 1486. After leaving Brescia he moved to Reggio, where he made the friendship of the famous Giovanni Pico della Mirandola. They continued intimate till the death of the latter in 1494; it was his nephew, Giovanni Francesco Pico della Mirandola, who afterwards wrote the Life of Savonarola. From Reggio the friar went to Genoa; and by this time his fame as a prophet in the north of Lombardy was well established. Now came the turning point in his life. Fourteen hundred and ninety is the date which determined his public action as a man of power in Italy. Lorenzo de' Medici, strangely enough, was the instrument of his recall in this year to Florence. Lorenzo, who, if he could have foreseen the future of his own family in Florence, would rather have stifled this monk's voice in his cowl, took pains to send for him and bring him to S. Mark's, the convent upon which his father had lavished so much wealth. He hoped to add lustre to his capital by the preaching of the most eloquent friar in Italy. Clear-sighted as he was, he could not discern the flame of liberty which burned in Savonarola's soul. Savonarola, the democratic party leader, was a force in politics as incalculable beforehand as Ferrucci the hero. On August 1, 1490, the monk ascended the pulpit of S. Mark's, and delivered a tremendous

sermon on a passage from the Apocalypse. On the eve of this commencement he is reported to have said: 'To-morrow I shall begin to preach, and I shall preach for eight years.' The Florentines were greatly moved. Savonarola had to remove from the Church of S. Mark to the Duomo; and thus began the spiritual dictatorship which he exercised thenceforth without intermission till his death.

Lorenzo soon began to resent the influence of this uncompromising monk, who, not content with moral exhortations, confidently predicted the coming of a foreign conqueror, the fall of the Magnificent, the peril of the Pope, and the ruin of the King of Naples. Yet it was no longer easy to suppress the preacher. Very early in his Florentine career Savonarola had proved himself to be fully as great an administrator as an orator. The Convent of San Marco, dominated by his personal authority, had made him Prior in 1491, and he was already engaged in a thorough reform of all the Dominican monasteries of Tuscany. It was usual for the Priors-elect of S. Mark to pay a complimentary visit to the Medici, their patrons. Savonarola, thinking this a worldly and unseemly custom, omitted to observe it. Lorenzo noticing the discourtesy, is reported to have said, with a smile: 'See now! here is a stranger who has come into *my house*, and will not deign to visit me.' He forgot that Savonarola looked upon his convent as a house of God. At the same time the prince made overtures of good-will to the Prior, frequently attended his services, and dropped gold into the alms-box of S. Mark's. Savonarola took no notice of him, and handed his florins over to the poor of the city. Then Lorenzo stirred up Fra Mariano da Genezzano, Savonarola's old rival, against him; but the clever rhetorician was no longer a match for the full-grown athlete of inspired eloquence. Da Genezzano was forced to leave Florence in angry discomfiture. With such unbending haughtiness did Savonarola already dare to brave the powers that be. He had recognised the oppressor of liberty, the corrupter of morality, the opponent of true religion in Lorenzo. He hated him as a tyrant. He would not give him the right hand of friendship or the salute of civility. In the same spirit he afterwards denounced Alexander, scorned his excommunication, and plotted with the kings of Christendom for the convening of a Council. Lorenzo, however, was a man of supreme insight into character, and knew how to value his antagonist. Therefore, when the hour for dying came, and when, true child of the Renaissance that he was, he felt the need of sacraments and absolution, he sent for Savonarola, saying that he was the only honest friar he knew. The magnanimity of the Medici was only equalled by the firmness of the monk. Standing by the bedside of the dying man, who had confessed his sins, Savonarola said: 'Three things are required of you: to have a full and lively faith in God's mercy; to restore what you have unjustly gained; to give back liberty to Florence.' Lorenzo assented readily to the first and second requisitions. At the third he turned his face in silence to the wall. He must indeed have felt

that to demand and promise this was easier than to carry it into effect. Savonarola left him without absolution. Lorenzo died.<sup>9</sup>

The third point insisted upon by the friar, Restore liberty to Florence, not only broke the peace of the dying prince, but it also afterwards for ever ruled the conduct of Savonarola. From this time his life is that of a statesman no less than of a preacher. What Lorenzo refused, or was indeed upon his deathbed quite unable to perform, the monk determined to achieve. Henceforth he became the champion of popular liberty in the pulpit. Feeling that in the people alone lay any hope of regeneration for Italy, he made it the work of his whole life to give the strength and sanction of religion to republican freedom. This work he sealed with martyrdom. The spirit of the creed which he bequeathed to his partisans in Florence was political no less than pious. Whether Savonarola was right to embark upon the perilous sea of statecraft cannot now be questioned. What prophet of Israel from Samuel to Isaiah was not the maker and destroyer of kings and constitutions? When we call him by their title, we mean to say that he, like them, controlled by spiritual force the fortunes of his people. Whether he sought it or not, this rôle of politician was thrust upon him by the course of events: nor was the history of Italian cities deficient in precedents of similar functions assumed by preaching friars.<sup>10</sup>

To Lorenzo succeeded the incompetent Piero de' Medici, who surrendered the fortresses of Tuscany to the French army. While Savonarola was prophesying a sword, a scourge, a deluge, Charles VIII. rode at the head of his knighthood into Florence. The city was leaderless, unused to liberty. Who but the monk who had predicted the invasion should now attempt to control it? Who but he whose voice alone should have the power to assemble and to sway the Florentines should now direct them? His administrative faculty in a narrow sphere had been proved by his reform of the Dominican Convents. His divine mission was authenticated by the arrival of the French. The Lord had

<sup>9</sup> It is just to observe that great doubt has been thrown on the facts above related concerning Lorenzo's death. Poliziano, who was with Lorenzo during his last illness, does not mention them in his letter to Jacobus Antiquarius (xv. Kal. Jun. 1492). But Burlamacchi, Pico, Barsanti, Razzi, and others of the Frate's party, agree in the story. What Poliziano wrote was that Savonarola confessed Lorenzo and retired without volunteering the blessing. Razzi says the interview between Savonarola and Lorenzo took place without witnesses; Pico and Burlamacchi relate the event as they heard of it from the lips of Savonarola. We have therefore to judge between the testimony of Poliziano, who held no communication with the friar, and the veracity of several narrators, biassed indeed by hostility toward the Medici, but in direct intercourse with the only man who could tell the exact truth of what passed—the confessor, Savonarola, who had been alone with Lorenzo. Villari, after sifting the evidence, arrives at the conclusion that we may believe Burlamacchi. The Baron Reumont, in his recent *Life of Lorenzo*, vol. ii. p. 590, gives some solid reasons for accepting this conclusion with caution, and Gino Capponi expresses a distinct disbelief in Burlamacchi's narration.

<sup>10</sup> It is enough to allude to Arnold of Brescia in Rome, to Fra Bussolari in Pavia, and to John of Vicenza. See Appendix iv.

raised him up to act as well as to utter. He felt this: the people felt it. He was not the man to refuse responsibility.

During the years of 1493 and 1494, when Florence together with Italy was in imminent peril, the voice of Savonarola never ceased to ring. His sermons on the psalm 'Quam bonus' and on the Ark of Noah are among the most stupendous triumphs of his eloquence. From his pulpit beneath the sombre dome of Brunelleschi he kept pouring forth words of power to resuscitate the free spirit of his Florentines. In 1495, when the Medici had been expelled and the French army had gone upon its way to Naples, Savonarola was called upon to reconstitute the state. He bade the people abandon their old system of *Parlamenti* and *Balia*, and establish a Grand Council after the Venetian type.<sup>11</sup> This institution, which seemed to the Florentines the best they had ever adopted, may be regarded by the historian as only one among their many experiments in constitution-making, if Savonarola had not stamped it with his peculiar genius by announcing that Christ was to be considered the Head of the State.<sup>12</sup> This step at once gave a theocratic bias to the government, which determined all the acts of the monk's administration. Not content with political organisation, too impatient to await the growth of good manners from sound institutions, he set about a moral and religious reformation. Poms, vanities, and vices were to be abandoned. Immediately the women and the young men threw aside their silks and fine attire. The Carnival songs ceased. Hymns and processions took the place of obscene choruses and pagan triumphs. The laws were remodelled in the same severe and abrupt spirit. Usury was abolished. Whatever Savonarola ordained, Florence executed. By

<sup>11</sup> This change was certainly wrought out by the influence of the friar and approved by him. Segni, lib. i. p. 15, speaks clearly on the point, and says that the friar for this service to the city 'debbe esser messo tra buoni datori di leggi, e debbe essere amato e onorato da' Fiorentini non altrimenti che Numa dai Romani e Solone dagli Ateniesi e Licurgo da' Lacedemoni.' The evil of the old system was that the *Parlamento*, which consisted of the citizens assembled in the *Piazza*, was exposed to intimidation, and had no proper initiative, while the *Balia*, or select body, to whom they then entrusted plenipotentiary authority, was always the faction for the moment uppermost. For the mode of working the *Parlamento* and *Balia* see Segni, p. 199; Nardi, lib. vi. cap. 4; Varchi, vol. ii. p. 372. Savonarola inscribed this octave stanza on the wall of the *Consiglio Grande*:

'Se questo popolar consiglio e certo  
Governo, popol, de la tua cittate  
Conservi, che da Dio t'è stato offerto,  
In pace starai sempre e libertate:  
Tien dunque l'occhio della mente aperto,  
Chè molte insidie ognor ti fien parate;  
E sappi che chi vuol far parlamento  
Vuol tórti dalle mani il reggimento.'

<sup>12</sup> See Varchi, vol. i. p. 169. Niccolò Capponi, in 1527, returning to the policy of Savonarola, caused the Florentines to elect Christ for their king, and inscribed upon the door of the *Palazzo Pubblico*:—

I. H. S. CHRISTUS REX FLORENTINI  
POPULI S. P. DECRETO ELECTUS.

the magic of his influence the city for a moment assumed a new aspect. It seemed as though the old austerity which Dante and Villani praised were about to return without the factious hate and pride that ruined mediæval Tuscany. In everything done by Savonarola at this epoch there was a strange combination of political sagacity with monastic zeal. Neither Guicciardini nor Machiavelli, writing years afterwards, when Savonarola had fallen and Florence was again enslaved, could propose anything wiser than his Consiglio Grande. Yet the fierce revivalism advocated by the friar—the bonfire of Lorenzo di Credi's and Fra Bartolommeo's pictures, of MSS. of Boccaccio and classic poets, and of all those fineries which a Venetian Jew is said to have valued in one heap at 22,000 florins—the recitations of such Bacchanalian songs as this—

Never was there so sweet a gladness,  
Joy of so pure and strong a fashion,  
As with zeal and love and passion  
Thus to embrace Christ's holy madness!  
Cry with me, cry as I now cry,  
Madness, madness, holy madness!

—the procession of boys and girls through the streets, shaming their elders into hypocritical piety, and breeding in their own hearts the intolerable priggishness of premature pietism—could not bring forth excellent and solid fruits. The change was far too violent. The temper of the race was not prepared for it. It clashed too rudely with Renaissance culture. It outraged the sense of propriety in the more moderate citizens, and roused to vindictive fury the worst passions of the self-indulgent and the worldly. A reaction was inevitable.<sup>13</sup>

Meanwhile the strong wine of prophecy intoxicated Savonarola. His fiery temperament, strained to the utmost by the dead weight of Florentine affairs that pressed upon him, became more irritable day by day. Vision succeeded vision; trance followed upon trance; agonies of dejection were suddenly transformed into outbursts of magnificent and soul-sustaining enthusiasm. It was no wonder if, passing as he had done from the discipline of the cloister to the dictatorship of a republic, he should make extravagant mistakes. The tension of this abnormal situation in the city grew to be excessive, and cool thinkers predicted that Savonarola's position would become untenable. Parties began to form and gather to a head. The followers of the monk, by far the largest section of the people, received the name of Piagnoni or Frateschi. The friends of the Medici, few at first and cautious, were called Bigi. The opponents of Savonarola and of the Medici, who hated his theocracy,

<sup>13</sup> The position of the Puritan leaders in England was somewhat similar to Savonarola's. But they had, at the end of a long war, the majority of the nation with them. Besides, the English temperament was more adapted to Puritanism than the Italian, nor were the manifestations of piety prescribed by Parliament so extravagant. And yet even in England a reaction took place under the Restoration.

but desired to see an oligarchy and not a tyranny in Florence, were known as the *Arabbiati*.

The discontent which germinated in Florence displayed itself in Rome. Alexander found it intolerable to be assailed as Antichrist by a monk who had made himself master of the chief Italian republic. At first he used his arts of blandishment and honeyed words in order to lure Savonarola to Rome. The friar refused to quit Florence. Then Alexander suspended him from preaching. Savonarola obeyed, but wrote at the same time to Charles VIII., denouncing his indolence and calling upon him to reform the Church. At the request of the Florentine Republic, though still suffering from the Pope's interdict, he then resumed his preaching. Alexander sought next to corrupt the man he could not intimidate. To the suggestion that a Cardinal's hat might be offered him, Savonarola replied that he preferred the red crown of martyrdom. Ascending the pulpit of the Duomo in 1496, he preached the most fiery of all his Lenten courses. Of this series of orations Milman writes: 'His triumphal career began with the Advent of 1494 on Haggai and the Psalms. But it is in the Carême of 1496 on Amos and Zechariah that the preacher girds himself to his full strength, when he had attained his full authority, and could not but be conscious that there was a deep and dangerous rebellion brooding in the hearts of the hostile factions at Florence, and when already ominous rumours began to be heard from Rome. He that would know the power, the daring, the oratory of Savonarola, must study this volume.'<sup>14</sup>

Very terrific indeed are the denunciations contained in these discourses—denunciations fulminated without disguise against the Pope and priests of Rome, against the Medici, against the Florentines themselves, in whom the traces of rebellion were beginning to appear. Mingled with these vehement invectives, couched in Savonarola's most impassioned style and heightened by his most impressive imagery, are political harangues and polemical arguments against the Pope. The position assumed by the friar in his war with Rome was not a strong one, and the reasoning by which he supported it was marked by curious self-deception mingled with apparent efforts to deceive his audience. He had not the audacious originality of Luther. He never went to the length of braving Alexander by burning his bulls and by denying the authority of popes in general. Not daring to break all connection with the Holy See, he was driven to quibble about the distinction between the office and the man, assuming a hazardous attitude of obedience to the Church, whose head and chief he daily outraged. At the same time he took no pains to enlist the sympathies of the Italian princes, many of whom might presumably have been hostile to the Pope, on his side of the quarrel. All the tyrants came in for a share of his prophetic indignation. Lodovico Sforza, the lord of Mirandola, and Piero de' Medici

<sup>14</sup> These sermons were printed from the notes taken by Lorenzo Violi in one volume at Venice, 1534.

felt themselves specially aggrieved, and kept urging Alexander to extinguish this source of scandal to established governments. Against so great and powerful a host one man could not stand alone. Savonarola's position became daily more dangerous in Florence. The merchants, excommunicated by the Pope, and thus exposed to pillage in foreign markets, grumbled at the friar who spoiled their trade. The ban of interdiction lay upon the city, where the sacraments could not longer be administered or the dead be buried with the rites of Christians. Meanwhile, a band of high-spirited and profligate young men, called Compagnacci, used every occasion to insult and interrupt him. At last in March 1498 his staunch friends, the Signory, or supreme executive of Florence, suspended him from preaching in the Duomo. Even the populace were weary of the protracted quarrel with the Holy See; nor could any but his own fanatical adherents anticipate the wars which threatened the State, with equanimity.

Savonarola himself felt that the supreme hour was come. One more resource was left; to that he would now betake himself; he could afterwards but die. This last step was the convening of a general council.<sup>15</sup> Accordingly he addressed letters to all the European potentates. One of these inscribed to Charles VIII., was despatched, intercepted, and conveyed to Alexander. He wrote also to the Pope and warned him of his purpose. The termination of that epistle is noteworthy: 'I can thus have no longer any hope in your Holiness, but must turn to Christ alone, who chooses the weak of this world to confound the strong lions among the perverse generations. He will assist me to prove and sustain, in the face of the world, the holiness of the work for the sake of which I so greatly suffer: and He will inflict a just punishment on those who persecute me and would impede its progress. As for myself, I seek no earthly glory, but long eagerly for death. May your Holiness no longer delay, but look to your salvation.'

But while girding on his armour for this single-handed combat with the Primate of Christendom and the Princes of Italy, the martyrdom to which Savonarola now looked forward fell upon him. Growing yearly more confident in his visions and more willing to admit his supernatural powers, he had imperceptibly prepared the pit which finally engulfed him. Often had he professed his readiness to prove his vocation by fire. Now came the moment when this defiance to an ordeal was answered.<sup>16</sup> A Franciscan of Apulia offered to meet him in the flames and see whether he were of God or not. Fra Domenico, Savonarola's devoted

<sup>15</sup> This scheme was by no means utterly unpractical. The Borgia had only just escaped deposition in 1495 by the gift of a Cardinal's hat to the Bishop of S. Malo. He was hated no less than feared through the length and breadth of Italy. But Savonarola had allowed the favourable moment to pass by.

<sup>16</sup> There seems to be no doubt that this Ordeal by Fire was finally got up by the Compagnacci with the sanction of the Signory, who were anxious to relieve themselves by any means of Savonarola. The Franciscan chosen to enter the flames together with Fra Domenico was a certain Giuliano Rondinelli. Nardi calls him Andrea Rondinelli.



friend, took up the gauntlet and proposed himself as champion. The furnace was prepared: both monks stood ready to enter it; all Florence was assembled in the Piazza to witness what should happen. Various obstacles, however, arose; and after waiting a whole day for the Friar's triumph, the people had to retire to their homes under a pelting shower of rain, unsatisfied, and with a dreary sense that after all their prophet was but a mere man. The Compagnacci got the upper hand. S. Mark's convent was besieged. Savonarola was led to prison, never to issue till the day of his execution by the rope and faggot. We may draw a veil over those last weeks. Little indeed is known about them, except that in his cell the Friar composed his meditations on the 31st and 51st Psalms, the latter of which was published in Germany with a preface by Luther in 1573. Of the rest we hear only of prolonged torture before stupid and malignant judges, of falsified evidence, and of contradictory confessions. What he really said and chose to stand by, what he retracted, what he shrieked out in the delirium of the rack, and what was falsely imputed to him, no one now can settle.<sup>17</sup> Though the spirit was strong, the flesh was weak; he had the will but not the nerve to be a martyr. At ten o'clock on the 23rd day of May, 1498, he was led forth together with brother Salvestro, the confidant of his visions, and brother Domenico, his champion in the affair of the ordeal, to a stage prepared in the piazza.<sup>18</sup> These two men were hanged first. Savonarola was left till the last. As the hangman tied the rope round his neck, a voice from the crowd shouted: 'Prophet, now is the time to perform a miracle!' The Bishop of Vasona, who conducted the execution, stripped his friar's frock from him, and said, 'I separate thee from the Church militant and triumphant.' Savonarola, firm and combative even at the point of death, replied, 'Militant, yes: triumphant, no: *that* is not yours.' The last words he uttered were, 'The Lord has suffered as much for me.'

<sup>17</sup> Nardi, lib. ii. vol. i. p. 128, treats the whole matter of Savonarola's confessions under torture with good sense. He says: 'Avendo domandato il frate quello che diceva e affermava delle sue esamine fatte infino a quel dì, rispose, che ciò ch' egli aveva ne' tempi passati detto e predetto era la pura verità, e che quello di che s' era ridetto e aveva ritratto, era tutto falso e era seguito per il dolor grande e per la paura che egli aveva de' tormenti, e che di nuovo si ridirebbe e ritratterebbe tante volte, quante ei fusse di nuovo tormentato, perciò che si conosceva molto debole e inconstante nel sopportare i supplicii.' Burchard, in his Diary, reports the childish, foul, malignant gossip current in Rome. This may be read in the 'Preuves et Observations' appended to the *Memoirs of De Comines*, vol. v. p. 512. See the Marchese Gino Capponi's *Storia della Firenze* (tom. ii. pp. 248-51) for a critical analysis of the depositions falsely ascribed to Savonarola.

<sup>18</sup> There is a curious old picture in the Pinacoteca of Perugia which represents the burning of the three friars. The whole Piazza della Signoria is shown, with the houses of the fifteenth century, and without the statues which afterwards adorned it. The spectator fronts the Palazzo, and has to his extreme right the Loggia de' Lanzi. The centre of the square is occupied by a great circular pile of billets and faggots, to which a wooden bridge of scaffolding leads from the left angle of the Palazzo. From the middle of the pile rises a pole, to which the bodies of the friars in their white clothes are suspended. Sta. Maria del Fiore, the Badia tower, and the distant hills above Fiesole complete a scene which is no doubt accurate in detail.

Then the noose was tightened round his neck. The fire beneath was lighted. The flames did not reach his body while life was in it; but those who gazed intently thought they saw the right hand give the sign of benediction. A little child afterwards saw his heart still whole among the ashes cast into the Arno; and almost to this day flowers have been placed every morning of the 23rd of May upon the slab of the Piazza where his body fell.

Thus died Savonarola: and immediately he became a saint. His sermons and other works were universally distributed. Medals in his honour were struck. Raphael painted him among the Doctors of the Church in the Camera della Segnatura of the Vatican. The Church, with strange inconsistency, proposed to canonise the man whom she had burned as a contumacious heretic and a corrupter of the people. This canonisation never took place; but many Dominican churches used a special office with his name and in his honour.<sup>19</sup> A legend similar to that of S. Francis in its wealth of mythical details embalmed the memory of even the smallest incidents of his life. But, above all, he lived in the hearts of the Florentines. For many years to come his name was the watchword of their freedom; his prophecies sustained their spirit during the siege of 1528;<sup>20</sup> and it was only by returning to his policy that Niccolo Capponi and Francesco Carducci ruled the people through those troublous times. The political action of Savonarola forms but a short episode in the history of Florence. His moral revival belongs to the history of popular enthusiasm. His philosophical and theological writings are chiefly interesting to the student of post-mediaeval scholasticism. His attitude as monastic leader of the populace, attempting to play the old game whereby the factious warfare of a previous age had been suspended by appeals to piety, and politicians had looked for aid outside the nation, was anachronistic. But his prophecy, his insight into the coming of a new era for the Church and for Italy, is a main fact in the psychology of the Renaissance.

<sup>19</sup> *Officio del Savonarola*, with preface by Cesare Guasti. Firenze, 1863.

<sup>20</sup> Guicciardini, in his *Ricordi*, No. 1., refers the incredible obstinacy of the Florentines of this period in hoping against all hope and reason to Savonarola: 'Questa ostinazione ha causata in gran parte la fede di non potere perire, secondo le predicationi di Fra Jeronimo da Ferrare.'

## CHAPTER X

### CHARLES VIII

*The Italian States confront the Great Nations of Europe—Policy of Louis XI. of France—Character of Charles VIII.—Preparations for the Invasion of Italy—Position of Lodovico Sforza—Diplomatic Difficulties in Italy after the Death of Lorenzo de' Medici—Weakness of the Republics—Il Moro—The year 1494—Alfonso of Naples—Inefficiency of the Allies to cope with France—Charles at Lyons is stirred up to the Invasion of Italy by Giuliano della Rovere—Charles at Asti and Pavia—Murder of Gian Galeazzo Sforza—Mistrust in the French Army—Rapa'lo and Fivizzano—The Entrance into Tuscany—Part played by Piero de' Medici—Charles at Pisa—His Entrance into Florence—Piero Capponi—The March on Rome—Entry into Rome—Panic of Alexander VI.—The March on Naples—The Spanish Dynasty: Alfonso and Ferdinand—Alfonso II. escapes to Sicily—Ferdinand II. takes Refuge in Ischia—Charles at Naples—The League against the French—De Comines at Venice—Charles makes his Retreat by Rome, Siena, Pisa, and Pontremoli—The Battle of Fornovo—Charles reaches Asti and returns to France—Italy becomes the Prize to be fought for by France, Spain, and Germany—Importance of the Expedition of Charles VIII.*

ONE of the chief features of the Renaissance was the appearance for the first time on the stage of history of full-formed and colossal nations. France, Spain, Austria, and England are now to measure their strength. Venice, Florence, Milan, Naples, even Rome, are destined in the period that is opening for Europe to play but secondary parts. Italy, incapable of coping with these great Powers, will become the mere arena of their contests, the object of their spoliations. Yet the Italians themselves were far from being conscious of this change. Accustomed through three centuries to a system of diplomacy and intrigue among their own small states, they still thought more of the balance of power within the peninsula than of the means to be adopted for repelling foreign force. Their petty jealousies kept them disunited at an epoch when the best chance of national freedom lay in a federation. Firmly linked together in one league, or subject to a single prince, the Italians might not only have met their foes on equal ground, but even have taken a foremost place among the modern nations.<sup>1</sup> Instead of that, their princes were foolish enough to think that they could set France, Germany, or Spain in motion for the attainment of selfish objects within the narrow sphere of Italian politics, forgetting the disproportion be-

<sup>1</sup> Read, however, Sismondi's able argument against the view that Italy, united as a single nation under a sovereign, would have been better off, vol. vii. p. 298 et seq. He is of opinion that her only chance lay in a Confederation. See chapter ii. above, for a discussion of this chance.

tween these huge monarchies and a single city like Florence, a mere province like the Milanese. It was just possible for Lorenzo de' Medici to secure the tranquillity of Italy by combining the Houses of Sforza and of Aragon with the Papal See in the chains of the same interested policy with the Commonwealth of Florence. It was ridiculous of Lodovico Sforza to fancy that he could bring the French into the game of peninsula intrigue without irrevocably ruining its artificial equilibrium. The first sign of the alteration about to take place in European history was the invasion of Italy by Charles VIII. This holiday excursion of a hare-brained youth was as transient as a border-foray on a large scale. The so-called conquest was only less sudden than the subsequent loss of Italy by the French. Yet the tornado which swept the peninsula from north to south, and returned upon its path from south to north within the space of a few months, left ineffaceable traces on the country which it traversed, and changed the whole complexion of the politics of Europe.

The invasion of Italy had been long prepared in the counsels of Louis XI. After spending his lifetime in the consolidation of the French monarchy, he constructed an inheritance of further empire for his successors by dictating to the old King René of Anjou (1474) and to the Count of Maine (1481) the two wills by which the pretensions of the House of Anjou to the Crown of Naples were transmitted to the royal family of France.<sup>2</sup> On the death of Louis, Charles VIII. became king in 1483. He was then aged only thirteen, and was still governed by his elder sister, Anne de Beaujeu.<sup>3</sup> It was not until 1492 that he actually took the reins of the kingdom into his own hands. This year, we may remark, is one of the most memorable dates in history. In 1492 Columbus discovered America: in 1492 Roderigo Borgia was made Pope: in 1492 Spain became a nation by the conquest of Granada. Each of these events was no less fruitful of consequences to Italy than was the accession of Charles VIII. The discovery of America, followed in another six years by Vasco de Gama's exploration of the Indian seas, diverted the commerce of the world into new channels; Alexander VI. made the Reformation and the Northern Schism certainties; the consolidation of Spain prepared a way for the autocracy of Charles V. Thus the commercial, the spiritual, and the political sceptre fell in this one year from the grasp of the Italians.

Both Philip de Comines and Guicciardini have described the appearance and the character of the prince who was destined to play a part so prominent, so pregnant of results, and yet so trivial in the affairs of

<sup>2</sup> Sismondi, vol. vi. p. 285. The Appendix of *Pièces Justificatives* to Philip de Comines' *Memoirs* contains the will of René, King of Sicily, Count of Provence, dated July 22, 1474, by which he constitutes his nephew, Charles of Anjou, Duke of Calabria, Count of Maine, his heir-in-chief; as well as the will of Charles of Anjou, King of Sicily, Count of Provence, dated December 10, 1481, by which he makes Louis XI. his heir, naming Charles the Dauphin next in succession.

<sup>3</sup> Her husband was a cadet of the House of Bourbon.

Europe. Providence, it would seem, deigns frequently to use for the most momentous purposes some pantaloon or puppet, environing with special protection and with the prayers and aspirations of whole peoples a mere mannikin. Such a puppet was Charles. 'From infancy he had been weak in constitution and subject to illnesses. His stature was short, and his face very ugly, if you except the dignity and vigour of his glance. His limbs were so disproportioned that he had less the appearance of a man than of a monster. Not only was he ignorant of liberal arts, but he hardly knew his letters. Though eager to rule, he was in truth made for anything but that; for while surrounded by dependents, he exercised no authority over them and preserved no kind of majesty. Hating business and fatigue, he displayed in such matters as he took in hand a want of prudence and of judgment. His desire for glory sprang rather from impulse than from reason. His liberality was inconsiderate, immoderate, promiscuous. When he displayed inflexibility of purpose, it was more often an ill-founded obstinacy than firmness, and that which many people called his goodness of nature rather deserved the name of coldness and feebleness of spirit.' This is Guicciardini's portrait. De Comines is more brief. 'The King was young, a fledgling from the nest; provided neither with money nor with good sense, weak, wilful, and surrounded by foolish counsellors.'

These foolish counsellors, or, as Guicciardini calls them, 'men of low estate, body-servants for the most part of the king,' were headed by Stephen de Vesc, who had been raised from the post of the king's valet de chambre to be the Seneschal de Beaucaire, and by William Briçonnet, formerly a merchant now Bishop of S. Malo. These men had everything to gain by an undertaking which would flatter the vanity of their master and draw him into still closer relations with themselves. Consequently, when the Count of Belgioioso arrived at the French Court from Milan, urging the king to press his claims on Naples, and promising him a free entrance into Italy through the province of Lombardy and the Port of Genoa, he found ready listeners. Anne de Beaujeu in vain opposed the scheme. The splendour and novelty of the proposal to conquer such a realm as Italy inflamed the imagination of Charles, the cupidity of his courtiers, the ambition of de Vesc and Briçonnet. In order to assure his situation at home, Charles concluded treaties with the neighbouring great Powers. He bought peace with Henry VII. of England by the payment of large sums of money. The Emperor Maximilian, whose resentment he had aroused by sending back his daughter Margaret after breaking his promise to marry her, and by taking to wife Anne of Brittany, who was already engaged to the Austrian, had to be appeased by the cession of provinces. Ferdinand of Spain received as the price of his neutrality the strong places of the Pyrenees which formed the key to France upon that side. Having thus secured tranquillity at home by ruinous concessions, Charles was free to turn his attention to Italy. He began by concentrating stores and ships on the southern ports of Mar-

seilles and Genoa; then he moved downward with his army, to Lyons, in 1494.

At this point we are called to consider the affairs of Italy, which led the Sforza to invite his dangerous ally. Lorenzo de' Medici during his lifetime had maintained a balance of power between the several states by his treaties with the Courts of Milan, Naples, and Ferrara. When he died, Piero at once showed signs of departure from his father's policy. The son and husband of Orsini,<sup>4</sup> he embraced the feudal pride and traditional partialities of the great Roman House who had always been devoted to the cause of Naples. The suspicions of Lodovico Sforza were not unreasonably aroused by noticing that the tyrant of Florence inclined to the alliance of King Ferdinand rather than to his own friendship. At this same time Alfonso, the Duke of Calabria, heir to the throne of Naples, was pressing the rights of his son-in-law, Gian Galeazzo Sforza, on the attention of Italy, complaining loudly that his uncle Lodovico ought no longer to withhold from him the reins of government.<sup>5</sup> Gian Galeazzo was in fact the legitimate successor of Galeazzo Maria Sforza, who had been murdered in Santo Stefano in 1476. After this assassination Madonna Bona of Savoy and Cecco Simonetta, who had administered the Duchy as grand vizier during three reigns extending over a period of half a century, governed Milan as regents for the young duke. But Lodovico, feeling himself powerful enough to assume the tyranny, beheaded Simonetta at Pavia in 1480, and caused Madonna Bona, the duke's mother, on the pretext of her immorality, to quit the regency. Thus he took the affairs of Milan into his own hands, confined his nephew in an honourable prison, and acted in a way to make it clear that he intended thenceforth to be duke in fact.<sup>6</sup> It was the bad conscience inseparable from this usurpation which made him mistrust the princes of the house of Aragon, whose rights in Isabella, wife of the young duke, were set at nought by him. The same uneasy sense of wrong inclined him to look with dread upon the friendship of the Medici for the ruling family of Naples.

While affairs were in this state, and as yet no open disturbance in Lorenzo's balance of power had taken place, Alexander VI. was elected to the Papacy. It was usual for the princes and cities of Italy to compliment the Pope with embassies on his assumption of the tiara; and Lodovico suggested that the representatives of Milan, Florence, Ferrara,

<sup>4</sup> His mother Clarice and his wife Alfonsina were both of them Orsini. Guicciardini in his 'Dialogo del Reggimento di Firenze' (*Op. Ined.* vol. ii. p. 46), says of him: 'Sendo nato di madre forestiera, era imbastardito, in lui il sangue Fiorentino, e degenerato in costumi esterni, e troppo insolenti e altieri al nostro vivere' Piero, nevertheless, refused to accept estates from King Alfonso which would have made him a baron and feudatory of Naples. See *Arch. Stor.* vol. i. p. 347.

<sup>5</sup> The young duke was aged twenty-four in 1493.

<sup>6</sup> Lodovico had taken measures for cloaking his usurpation with the show of legitimate right. He betrothed his niece Bianca Maria, in 1494, to the Emperor Maximilian, with a dower of 400,000 ducats, receiving in return an investiture of the Duchy, which, however, he kept secret.

and Naples should enter Rome together in a body. The foolish vanity of Piero, who wanted to display the splendour of his own equipage without rivals, induced him to refuse this proposal, and led to a similar refusal on the part of Ferdinand. This trivial circumstance confirmed the suspicions of Lodovico, who, naturally subtle and intriguing, thought that he discerned a deep political design in what was really little more than the personal conceit of a broad-shouldered simpleton.<sup>7</sup> He already foresaw that the old system of alliances established by Lorenzo must be abandoned.

Another slight incident contributed to throw the affairs of Italy into confusion by causing a rupture between Rome and Naples. Lorenzo, by the marriage of his daughter to Franceschetto Cibo, had contrived to engage Innocent VIII. in the scheme of policy which he framed for Florence, Naples, Milan, and Ferrara. But on the accession of Alexander, Franceschetto Cibo determined to get rid of Anguillara, Cervetri, and other fiefs, which he had taken with his father's connivance from the Church. He found a purchaser in Virginio Orsini. Alexander complained that the sale was an infringement of his rights. Ferdinand supported the title of the Orsini to his new acquisitions. This alienated the Pope from the King of Naples, and made him willing to join with Milan and Venice in a new league formed in 1493.

Thus the old equilibrium was destroyed, and fresh combinations between the disunited powers of Italy took place. Lodovico, however, dared not trust his new friends. Venice had too long hankered after Milan to be depended upon for real support; and Alexander was known to be in treaty for a matrimonial alliance between his son Geoffrey and Donna Sancia of Aragon. Lodovico was therefore alone, without a firm ally in Italy, and with a manifestly fraudulent title to maintain. At this juncture he turned his eyes towards France; while his father-in-law, the Duke of Ferrara, who secretly hated him, and who selfishly hoped to secure his own advantage in the general confusion which he anticipated, urged him to this fatal course. Alexander at the same time, wishing to frighten the princes of Naples into a conclusion of the projected marriage, followed the lead of Lodovico, and showed himself at this moment not averse to a French invasion.

It was in this way that the private cupidities and spites of princes brought woe on Italy. Lodovico's determination to secure himself in the usurped Duchy of Milan, Ercole d' Este's concealed hatred, and Alexander's unholy eagerness to aggrandise his bastards, were the vile and trivial causes of an event which, however inevitable, ought to have been as long as possible deferred by all true patriots in Italy. But in Italy there was no zeal for freedom left, no honour among princes, no virtue in the Church. Italy, which in the thirteenth century numbered

<sup>7</sup> Piero de' Medici was what the French call a *bel homme*, and little more. He was tall, muscular, and well-made, the best player at *pallone* in Italy, a good horseman, fluent and agreeable in conversation, and excessively vain of these advantages.



1,800,000 citizens—that is, members of free cities, exercising the franchise in the government of their own states—could show in the fifteenth only about 18,000 such burghers:<sup>8</sup> and these in Venice were subject to the tyranny of the Council of Ten, in Florence had been enervated by the Medici, in Siena were reduced by party feuds and vulgar despotism to political imbecility. Amid all the splendours of revived literature and art, of gorgeous courts and refined societies, this indeed was the right moment for the Dominican visionary to publish his prophecies, and for the hunchback puppet of destiny to fulfill them. Guicciardini deploras, not without reason, the bitter sarcasm of fate which imposed upon his country the insult of such a conqueror as Charles. He might with equal justice have pointed out in Lodovico Sforza the actor of a tragi-comic part upon the stage of Italy. Lodovico, called Il Moro, not, as the great historian asserts, because he was of dark complexion, but because he had adopted the mulberry tree for his device,<sup>9</sup> was in himself an epitome of all the qualities which for the last two centuries had contributed to the degradation of Italy in the persons of the despots. Gifted originally with good abilities, he had so accustomed himself to petty intrigues that he was now incapable of taking a straightforward step in any direction. While he boasted himself the Son of Fortune and listened with complacency to a foolish rhyme that ran: *God only and the Moor foreknow the future safe and sure*, he never acted without blundering, and lived to end his days in the intolerable tedium of imprisonment at Loches. He was a thoughtful and painstaking ruler; yet he so far failed to win the affection of his subjects that they tossed up their caps for joy at the first chance of getting rid of him. He disliked bloodshed; but the judicial murder of Simonetta, and the arts by which he forced his nephew into an early grave, have left an inefaceable stain upon his memory. His court was adorned by the presence of Lionardo da Vinci; but at the same time it was so corrupt that, as Corio tells us,<sup>10</sup> fathers sold their daughters, brothers their sisters, and husbands their wives there. In a word Lodovico, in spite of his boasted prudence,

<sup>8</sup> This is Sismondi's calculation (vol. vii. p. 305). It must be taken as a rough one. Still students who have weighed the facts presented in Ferrari's *Rivoluzioni d'Italia* will not think the estimate exaggerated. In the municipal and civil wars, free burghs were extinguished by the score.

<sup>9</sup> See Varchi, vol. i. p. 49. Also the *Elogia* of Paulus Jovius, who remarks that the complexion of Lodovico was fair. His surname, however, provoked puns. He had, for example, a picture painted, in which Italy, dressed like a queen, is having her robe brushed by a Moorish page. A motto ran beneath, *Per Italia nettat d'ogni bruttura*. He adopted the mulberry because Pliny called it the most prudent of all trees, inasmuch as it waits till winter is well over to put forth its leaves, and Lodovico piqued himself on his sagacity in choosing the right moment for action.

<sup>10</sup> *L'Historia di Milano*, Vinegia, 1554, p. 448: 'A quella (scola di Venere) per ogni canto vi si convenivan bellissimi giovani. I padri vi concedevano le figliuole, i mariti le mogliere, i fratelli le sorelle; e per sifatto modo senz' alcun riguardo molti concorreato all' amoroso ballo, che cosa stupendissima era riputata per qualunque l' intendeva.'

wrought the ruin of Italy and himself by his tortuous policy, and contributed by his private crimes and dissolute style of living no little to the general depravity of his country.<sup>11</sup>

Amid this general perturbation of the old political order the year 1494, marked in its first month by the death of King Ferdinand, began 'a year,' to quote from Guicciardini, 'the most unfortunate for Italy, the very first in truth of our disastrous years, since it opened the door to numberless and horrible calamities, in which it may be said that a great portion of the world has subsequently shared.' The expectation and uneasiness of the whole nation were proportioned to the magnitude of the coming change. On every side the invasion of the French was regarded with that sort of fascination which a very new and exciting event is wont to inspire. In one mood the Italians were inclined to hail Charles as a general pacificator and restorer of old liberties.<sup>12</sup> Savonarola had preached of him as the *flagellum Dei*, the minister appointed to regenerate the Church and purify the fount of spiritual life in the peninsula. In another frame of mind they shuddered to think what the advent of the barbarians—so the French were called—might bring upon them. It was universally agreed that Lodovico by his invitation had done no more than bring down, as it were, by a breath the avalanche which had been long impending. 'Not only the preparations made by land and sea, but also the consent of the heavens and of men, announced the woes in store for Italy. Those who pretend either by art or divine inspiration to the knowledge of the future, proclaimed unanimously that greater and more frequent changes, occurrences more strange and awful than had for many centuries been seen in any part of the world, were at hand.' After enumerating divers signs and portents, such as the passing day after day in the region round Arezzo of innumerable armed men mounted on gigantic horses with a hideous din of drums and trumpets, the great historian resumes: 'These things filled the people with incredible fear; for, long before, they had been terrified by the reputation of the power of the French and of their fierceness, seeing that histories are full of their deeds—how they had already overrun the whole of Italy, sacked the city of Rome with fire and sword, subdued many provinces of Asia, and at one time or another smitten with their arms all quarters of the world.'

Among all the potentates of Italy, Alfonso of Naples had the most to dread: for against him the invasion was specially directed. No time was to be lost. He assembled his allies at Vicovaro near Tivoli in July and explained to them his theory of resistance. The allies were Florence,

<sup>11</sup> Guicciardini, *Storia d' Italia*, lib. iii. p. 35, sums up the character of Lodovico with masterly completeness.

<sup>12</sup> This was the strictly popular as opposed to the aristocratic feeling. The common folk, eager for novelty and smarting under the bad rule of monsters like the Aragonese princes, expected in Charles VIII. a Messiah, and cried 'Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini.' See passages quoted in a note below.

Rome, Bologna, and all the minor powers of Romagna.<sup>13</sup> For once the southern and the middle states of Italy were united against a common foe. After Alfonso, Alexander felt himself in greatest peril, for he dreaded the assembly of a Council which might depose him from the throne he had bought by simony. So strong was his terror that he had already sent ambassadors to the Sultan imploring him for aid against the Most Christian King, and had entreated Ferdinand the Catholic, instead of undertaking a crusade against the Turk, to employ his arms in opposition to the French. But Bajazet was too far off to be of use; and Ferdinand was prudent. It remained for the allies to repel the invader by their unassisted force. This might have been done if Alfonso's plan had been adhered to. He designed sending a fleet, under his brother Don Federigo, to Genoa, and holding with his own troops the passes of the Apennines to the North, while Piero de' Medici undertook to guard the entrances to Tuscany on the side of Lunigiana. The Duke of Calabria meanwhile was to raise Gian Galeazzo's standard in Lombardy. But that absolute agreement which is necessary in the execution of a scheme so bold and comprehensive was impossible in Italy. The Pope insisted that attention should first be paid to the Colonnese—Prospero and Fabrizio being secret friends of France, and their castles offering a desirable booty. Alfonso, therefore, determined to occupy the confines of the Roman territory on the side of the Abruzzi, while he sent his son, with the generals Giovan Jacopo da Trivulzi and the Count of Pitigliano, into Lombardy. They never advanced beyond Cesena, where the troops of the Sforza, in conjunction with the French, held them at bay. The fleet under Don Federigo sailed too late to effect the desired rising in Genoa. The French, forewarned, had thrown 2,000 Swiss under the Bailly of Dijon and the Duke of Orleans into the city, and the Neapolitan admiral fell back upon Leghorn. The forces of the league were further enfeebled and divided by the necessity of leaving Virginio Orsini to check the Colonnese in the neighbourhood of Rome. How utterly Piero de' Medici by his folly and defection ruined what remained of the plan will be seen in the sequel. This sluggishness in action and dismemberment of forces—this total inability to strike a sudden blow—sealed beforehand the success of Charles. Alfonso, a tyrant afraid of his own subjects, Alexander, a Pope who had bought the tiara to the disgust of Christendom, Piero, conscious that his policy was disapproved by the Florentines, together with a parcel of egotistical petty despots, were not the men to save a nation. Italy was conquered, not by the French King, but by the vices of her own leaders. The

<sup>13</sup> Venice remained neutral. She had refused to side with Charles, on the pretext that the fear of the Turk kept her engaged. She declined to join the league of Alfonso by saying it was mad to save others at the risk of drawing the war into your own territory. Nothing is more striking than the want of patriotic sentiment or generous concurrence to a common end in Italy at this time. Florence, by temper and tradition favourable to France, had been drawn into the league by Piero de' Medici, whose sympathies were firm for the Aragonese princes.

whole history of Charles's expedition is one narrative of headlong rashness triumphing over difficulties and dangers which only the discord of tyrants and the disorganisation of peoples rendered harmless. The Atè of the gods had descended upon Italy, as though to justify the common belief that the expedition of Charles was divinely sustained and guided.<sup>14</sup>

While Alfonso and Alexander were providing for their safety in the South, Charles remained at Lyons, still uncertain whether he should enter Italy by sea or land, or indeed whether he should enter it at all. Having advanced so far as the Rhone valley, he felt satisfied with his achievement and indulged himself in a long bout of tournaments and pastimes. Besides, the want of money, which was to be his chief embarrassment throughout the expedition, had already made itself felt.<sup>15</sup> It was an Italian who at length roused him to make good his purpose against Italy—Giuliano de la Rovere,<sup>16</sup> the haughty nephew of Sixtus, the implacable foe of Alexander, whom he was destined to succeed in course of time upon the Papal throne. Burning to punish the Marrano, or apostate Moor, as he called Alexander, Giuliano stirred the king with taunts and menaces until Charles felt he could delay his march no longer. When once the French army got under weigh, it moved rapidly. Leaving Vienne on August 23, 1494, 3,600 men-at-arms, the flower of the French chivalry, 6,000 Breton archers, 6,000 crossbowmen, 8,000 Gascon infantry, 8,000 Swiss and German lances, crossed the Mont Genevre, debouched on Susa, passed through Turin, and entered Asti on September 19.<sup>17</sup> Neither Piedmont nor Montferrat stirred to resist them. Yet at almost any point upon the route they might have been at least delayed by hardy mountaineers until the commissariat of so large a force had proved an insurmountable difficulty. But before this hunchback conqueror with the big head and little legs, the valleys had been exalted and the rough places had been made plain. The princes whose interest it might have been to throw obstacles in the way of Charles were but children. The Duke of Savoy was only twelve years old, the Marquis of Montferrat fourteen; their mothers and guardians made terms with the French king, and opened their territories to his armies.

<sup>14</sup> This, of course, was Savonarola's prophecy. But both Guicciardini and De Comines use invariably the same language. The phrase *Dieu monstroit conduire l'entreprise* frequently recurs in the *Memoirs* of De Comines.

<sup>15</sup> 'La despense de ces navires estoit fort grande, et suis d'avis qu'elle cousta trois cens mille francs, et si ne servit de rien, et y alla tout l'argent contant que le Roy peut finer de ses finances: car comme j'ay dit, il n'estoit point pourveu ne de sens, ne d'argent ny d'autre chose nécessaire à telle entreprise, et si en vint bien à bout, moyennant la grâce de Dieu, qui clairement le donna ainsi à cognoistre.' De Comines, lib. vii.

<sup>16</sup> Guicciardini calls him on this occasion 'fatale instrumento e allora e prima e poi de' mali d'Italia.' Lib. i. cap. 3.

<sup>17</sup> I have followed the calculation of Sismondi (vol. vii. p. 383), to which should be added perhaps another 10,000 in all attached to the artillery, and 2,000 for sappers, miners, carpenters, &c. See Dennistoun, *Dukes of Urbino*, vol. i. p. 433, for a detailed list of Charles's armaments by land and sea.

At Asti Charles was met by Lodovico Sforza and his father-in-law, Ercole d'Este. The whole of that Milanese Court which Corio describes<sup>18</sup> followed in their train. It was the policy of the Italian princes to entrap their conqueror with courtesies, and to entangle in silken meshes the barbarian they dreaded. What had happened already at Lyons, what was going to repeat itself at Naples, took place at Asti. The French King lost his heart to ladies, and confused his policy by promises made to Dalilahs in the ball-room. At Asti he fell ill of the small-pox, but after a short time he recovered his health and proceeded to Pavia. Here a serious entanglement of interests arose. Charles was bound by treaties and engagements to Lodovico and his proud wife Beatrice d'Este; the very object of his expedition was to dethrone Alfonso and to assume the crown of Naples; yet at Pavia he had to endure the pathetic spectacle of his forlorn cousin<sup>19</sup> the young Giovanni Galeazzo Sforza in prison, and to hear the piteous pleadings of the beautiful Isabella of Aragon. Nursed in chivalrous traditions, incapable of resisting a woman's tears, what was Charles to do, when this princess in distress, the wife of his first cousin, the victim of his friend Lodovico, the sister of his foe Alfonso, fell at his feet and besought him to have mercy on her husband, on her brother, on herself? The situation was indeed enough to move a stouter heart than that of the feeble young king. For the moment Charles returned evasive answers to his petitioners; but the trouble of his soul was manifest, and no sooner had he set forth on his way to Piacenza than the Moor resolved to remove the cause of further vacillation. Sending to Pavia, Lodovico had his nephew poisoned.<sup>20</sup> When the news of Gian Galeazzo's death reached the French camp, it spread terror and embittered the mistrust which was already springing up between the frank cavaliers and the plausible Italians with whom they had to deal.

What was this beautiful land in the midst of which they found themselves, a land whose marble palaces were thronged with cut-throats in disguise, whose princes poisoned while they smiled, whose luxuriant meadows concealed fever, whose ladies carried disease upon their lips? To the captains and the soldiery of France, Italy already appeared a splendid and fascinating Circe, arrayed with charms, surrounded with illusions, hiding behind perfumed thickets her victims changed to

<sup>18</sup> See above, p. 275.

<sup>19</sup> The mothers of Charles VIII. and Gian Galeazzo were sisters, princesses of Savoy.

<sup>20</sup> Sismondi does not discuss the fact minutely, but he inclines to believe that Gian Galeazzo was murdered. Michelet raises a doubt about it, though the evidence is such as he would have accepted without question in the case of a Borgia. Guicciardini, who recounts the whole matter at length, says that all Italy believed the duke had been murdered, and quotes Teodoro da Pavia, one of the royal physicians, who attested to having seen clear signs of a slow poison in the young man. Pontano, *de Prudentiâ*, lib. 4, repeats the accusation. Guicciardini only doubts Lodovico's motives. He inclines to think the murder had been planned long before, and that Charles was invited into Italy in order that Lodovico might have a good opportunity for effecting it, while at the same time he had taken care to get the investiture of the Duchy from the Emperor ready against the event.

brutes, and building the couch of her seduction on the bones of murdered men. Yet she was so beautiful that, halt as they might for a moment and gaze back with yearning on the Alps that they had crossed, they found themselves unable to resist her smile. Forward they must march through the garden of enchantment, henceforth taking the precaution to walk with drawn sword, and, like Orlando in Morgana's park, to stuff their casques with roses that they might not hear the siren's voice too clearly. It was thus that Italy began the part she played through the Renaissance for the people of the North. 'The White Devil of Italy' is the title of one of Webster's best tragedies. A white Devil, a radiant daughter of sin and death, holding in her hands the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, and tempting the nations to eat: this is how Italy struck the fancy of the men of the sixteenth century. She was feminine, and they were virile; but she could teach and they must learn. She gave them pleasure; they brought force. The fruit of her embraces with the nations was the spirit of modern culture, the genius of the age in which we live.

Two terrible calamities warned the Italians with what new enemies they had to deal. Twice at the commencement of the invasion did the French use the sword which they had drawn to intimidate the sorceress. These terror-striking examples were the massacres of the inhabitants of Rapallo on the Genoese Riviera, and of Fivizzano in Lunigiana. Soldiers and burghers, even prisoners and wounded men in the hospitals, were butchered, first by the Swiss and German guards, and afterwards by the French, who would not be outdone by them in energy. It was thus that the Italians, after a century of bloodless battles and parade campaigning, learned a new art of war, and witnessed the first act of those Apocalyptic tragedies which were destined to drown the peninsula with French, Spanish, German, Swiss and native blood.

Meanwhile the French host had reached Parma, traversing, all through the golden autumn weather, those plains where mulberry and elm are married by festoons of vines above a billowy expanse of maize and corn. From Parma, placed beneath the northern spurs of the Apennines, to Sarzana, on the western coast of Italy, where the marbles of Carrara build their barrier against the Tyrrhene Sea, there leads a winding barren mountain pass. Charles took this route with his army, and arrived in the beginning of November before the walls of Sarzana. Meanwhile we may well ask what Piero de' Medici had been doing, and how he had fulfilled his engagement with Alfonso. He had undertaken, it will be remembered, to hold the passes of the Apennines upon this side. To have embarrassed the French troops among those limestone mountains, thinly forested with pine and chestnut trees, and guarded here and there with ancient fortresses, would have been a matter of no difficulty. With like advantages 2,000 Swiss troops during their wars of independence would have laughed to scorn the whole forces of Burgundy and Austria. But Piero, a feeble and false tyrant, preoccupied with Florentine factions, afraid of Lucca, and disinclined to push

forward into the territory of the Sforza, had as yet done nothing when the news arrived that Sarzana was on the point of capitulation. In this moment of peril he rode as fast as horses could carry him to the French camp, besought an interview with Charles, and then and there delivered up to him the keys of Sarzana and its citadel, together with those of Pietra Sanat, Libbrafratta, Pisa, and Leghorn. Any one who has followed the sea-coast between Pisa and Sarzana can appreciate the enormous value of these concessions to the invader. They relieved him of the difficulty of forcing his way along a narrow belt of land, which is hemmed in on one side by the sea and on the other by the highest and most abrupt mountain range in Italy. To have done this in the teeth of a resisting army and beneath the walls of hostile castles would have been all but impossible. As it was, Piero cut the Gordian knot by his incredible cowardice, and for himself gained only ruin and dishonour. Charles, the foe against whom he had plotted with Alfonso and Alexander, laughed in his face, and marched at once into Pisa. The Florentines, whom he had hitherto engaged in an unpopular policy, now rose in fury, expelled him from the city, sacked his palace, and erased from their memory the name of Medici except for execration. The unsuccessful tyrant, who had proved a traitor to his allies, to his country, and to himself, saved his life by flying first to Bologna and thence to Venice, where he remained in a sort of polite captivity—safe, but a slave, until the Doge and his council saw which way affairs would tend.

On the 9th of November Florence after a tyranny of fifty years, and Pisa after the servitude of a century, recovered their liberties and were able to reconstitute republican governments. But the situation of the two states was very different. The Florentines had never lost the name of liberty, which in Italy at that period meant less the freedom of the inhabitants to exercise self-government than the independence of the city in relation to its neighbours. The Pisans on the other hand had been reduced to subjection by Florence; their civic life had been stifled, their pride wounded in the tenderest point of honour, their population decimated by proscription and exile. The great sin of Florence was the enslavement of Pisa: and Pisa in this moment of anarchy burned to obliterate her shame with bloodshed. The French, understanding none of the niceties of Italian politics, and ignorant that in giving freedom to Pisa they were robbing Florence of her rights, looked on with wonder at the citizens who tossed the lion of the tyrant town into the Arno and took up arms against its officers. It is sad to witness this last spasm of the long-suppressed passion for liberty in the Pisans, while we know how soon they were reduced again to slavery by the selfish sister state, herself too thoroughly corrupt for liberty. The part of Charles, who espoused the cause of the Pisans with blundering carelessness, pretended to protect the new republic, and then abandoned it a few months later to its fate, provokes nothing but the languid contempt which all his acts inspire.

After the flight of Piero and the proclamation of Pisan liberty the



King of France was hailed as saviour of the free Italian towns. Charles received a magnificent address from Savonarola, who proceeded to Pisa, and harangued him as the chosen vessel of the Lord and the deliverer of the Church from anarchy. At the same time the Friar conveyed to the French King a courteous invitation from the Florentine republic to enter their city and enjoy their hospitality. Charles, after upsetting Piero de' Medici with the nonchalance of a horseman in the tilting yard, and restoring the freedom of Pisa for a caprice, remained as devoid of policy and as indifferent to the part assigned him by the prophet as he was before. He rode, armed at all points, into Florence on November 17, and took up his residence in the palace of the Medici. Then he informed the elders of the city that he had come as conqueror and not as guest, and that he intended to reserve to himself the disposition of the state.

It was a dramatic moment. Florence, with the Arno flowing through her midst, and the hills around her grey with olive-trees, was then even more lovely than we see her now. The whole circuit of her walls remained, nor had their crown of towers been levelled yet to make resistance of invading force more easy. Brunelleschi's dome and Giotto's tower and Arnolfo's Palazzo and the Loggie of Orcagna gave distinction to her streets and squares. Her churches were splendid with frescoes in their bloom, and with painted glass, over which as yet the injury of but a few brief years had passed. Her palaces, that are as strong as castles, overflowed with a population cultivated, polished, elegant, refined, and haughty. This Florence, the city of scholars, artists, intellectual sybarites and citizens in whom the blood of the old factions beat, found herself suddenly possessed as a prey of war by flaunting Gauls in their outlandish finery, plumed Germans, kilted Kelts, and parti-coloured Swiss. On the other hand these barbarians awoke in a terrestrial paradise of natural and æsthetic beauty. Which of us who has enjoyed the late gleams of autumn in Valdarno, but can picture to himself the revelation of the inner meaning of the world, incomprehensible yet soul subduing, which then first dawned upon the Breton bowmen and the bulls of Uri? Their impulse no doubt was to pillage and possess the wealth before them, as a child pulls to pieces the wonderful flower that has surprised it on some mountain meadow. But in the very rudeness of desire they paid a homage to the new-found loveliness of which they had not dreamed before.

Charles here as elsewhere showed his imbecility. He had entered and laid hands on hospitable Florence like a foe. What would he now do with her—reform the republic—legislate—impose a levy on the citizens, and lead them forth to battle? No. He asked for a huge sum of money, and began to bargain. The Florentine secretaries refused his terms. He insisted. Then Piero Capponi snatched the paper on which they were written, and tore it in pieces before his eyes. Charles cried: 'I shall sound my trumpets.' Capponi answered: 'We will ring our bells.' Beautiful as a dream is Florence; but her sombre

streets, overshadowed by gigantic belfries and masked by grim brown palace-fronts, contained a menace that the French King could not face. Let Capponi sound the tocsin, and each house would become a fortress, the streets would be barricaded with iron chains, every quarter would pour forth men by hundreds well versed in the arts of civic warfare. Charles gave way, covering with a bad joke the discomfiture he felt: *Ah, Ciappon, Ciappon, voi siete un mal Ciappon!* The secretaries beat down his terms. All he cared for was to get money.<sup>21</sup> He agreed to content himself with 120,000 florins. A treaty was signed, and in two days he quitted Florence.

Hitherto Charles had met with no serious obstacle. His invasion had fallen like the rain from heaven, and like rain, as far as he was concerned, it ran away to waste. Lombardy and Tuscany, the two first scenes in the pageant displayed by Italy before the French army, had been left behind. Rome now lay before them, magnificent in desolation; not the Rome which the Farnesi and Chigi and Barberini have built up from the quarried ruins of amphitheatres and baths, but the Rome of the Middle Ages, the city crowned with relics of a pagan past, herself still pagan, and holding in her midst the modern Antichrist. The progress of the French was a continued triumph. They reached Siena on the second of December. The Duke of Urbino and the lords of Pesaro and Bologna laid down their arms at their approach. The Orsini opened their castles: Virginio, the captain-general of the Aragonese army and grand constable of the kingdom of Naples, hastened to win for himself favourable terms from the French sovereign. The Baglioni betook themselves to their own rancours in Perugia. The Duke of Calabria retreated. Italy seemed bent on proving that cowardice and selfishness and incapacity had conquered her. Viterbo was gained: the Ciminian heights were traversed: the Campagna, bounded by the Alban and the Sabine hills, with Rome, a bluish cloud upon the lowlands of the Tiber, spread its solemn breadth of beauty at the invader's feet. Not a blow had been struck, when he reached the Porta del Popolo upon the 31st of December, 1494. At three o'clock in the afternoon began the entry of the French army. It was nine at night before the last soldiers, under the glaring light of torches and flambeaux, defiled through the gates, and took their quarters in the streets of the Eternal City. The gigantic barbarians of the cantons, flaunting with plumes and emblazoned surcoats, the chivalry of France, splendid with silk mantles and gilded corslets, the Scotch guard in their wild costume of kilt and philibeg, the scythe-like halberds of the German lanzknechts, the tangled elf-locks of stern-featured Bretons, stamped an ineffaceable impression on the people of the South. On this memorable occasion, as

<sup>21</sup> The want of money determined all Charles's operations in this expedition. Borrowing from Lodovico, laying requisitions on Piero and the Florentines, pawning the jewels of the Savoy princesses, he passed from place to place, bargaining and contracting debts instead of dictating laws and founding constitutions. *La carestia dei danari* is a phrase continually recurring in Guicciardini. Speaking of the jewels lent to Charles by the royal families of Savoy and Montferrat at Turin, de Comines exclaims: 'Et pouvez voir quel commencement de guerre c'estoit, si Dieu n'eut guidé l'œuvre.'

in a show upon some holiday, marched past before them specimens and vanguards of all those legioned races which were soon to be too well at home in every fair Italian dwelling-place. Nothing was wanting to complete the symbol of the coming doom but a representative of the grim, black, wiry infantry of Spain.

The Borgia meanwhile crouched within the Castle of S. Angelo. How would the Conqueror, now styled Flagellum Dei, deal with the abomination of desolation seated in the holy place of Christendom? At the side of Charles were the Cardinals Ascanio Sforza and Giuliano della Rovere, urging him to summon a council and depose the Pope. But still closer to his ear was Briçonnet, the *ci-devant* tradesman, who thought it would become his dignity to wear a Cardinal's hat. On this trifle turned the destinies of Rome, the doom of Alexander, the fate of the Church. Charles determined to compromise matters. He demanded a few fortresses, a red hat for Briçonnet, Cesare Borgia as a hostage for four months, and Djem, the brother of the Sultan.<sup>22</sup> After these agreements had been made and ratified, Alexander ventured to leave his castle and receive the homage of the faithful.

Charles stayed a month in Rome, and then set out for Naples. The fourth and last scene in the Italian pageant was now to be displayed. After the rich plain and proud cities of Lombardy, beneath their rampart of perpetual snow; after the olive gardens and fair towns of Tuscany; after the great name of Rome; Naples, at length, between Vesuvius and the sea, that first station of the Greeks in Italy, world-famed for its legends of the Sibyl and the sirens and the sorcerer Virgil, received her king. The very names of Parthenope, Posilippo, Inarime, Sorrento, Capri, have their fascination. There too the orange and lemon groves are more luxuriant; the grapes yield sweeter and more intoxicating wine; the villagers are more classically graceful; the volcanic soil is more fertile; the waves are bluer and the sun is brighter than elsewhere in the land. None of the conquerors of Italy have had the force to resist the allurements of the bay of Naples. The Greeks lost their native energy upon these shores, and realised in the history of their colonies the myth of Ulysses' comrades in the gardens of Circe. Hannibal was tamed by Capua. The Romans in their turn dreamed away their vigour at Baiæ, at Pompeii, at Capræ, until the whole region became a byword for voluptuous living. Here the Saracens were subdued to mildness, and became physicians instead of pirates. Lombards and Normans alike were softened down, and lost their barbarous fierceness amid the enchantments of the southern sorceress.

Naples was now destined to ruin for Charles whatever nerve yet remained to his festival army. The witch too, while brewing for the

<sup>22</sup> See above, p. 208, for the history of this unfortunate prince. When Alexander ceded Djem, whom he held as a captive for the Sultan at a yearly revenue of 40,000 ducats, he was under engagements with Bajazet to murder him. Accordingly Djem died of slow poison soon after he became the guest of Charles. The Borgia preferred to keep faith with the Turk.

French her most attractive potions, mixed with them a deadly poison—the virus of a fell disease, memorable in the annals of the modern world, which was destined to infect the nations of Europe from this centre, and to prove more formidable to our cities than even the leprosy of the Middle Ages.<sup>23</sup>

The kingdom of Naples, through the frequent uncertainty which attended the succession to the throne, as well as the suzerainty assumed and misused by the Popes, had been for centuries a standing cause of discord in Italy. The dynasty which Charles now hoped to dispossess was Spanish. After the death of Joanna II. in 1435, Alfonso, King of Aragon and Sicily, who had no claim to the crown beyond what he derived through a bastard branch of the old Norman dynasty, conquered Naples, expelled Count René of Anjou, and established himself in this new kingdom, which he preferred to those he had inherited by right. Alfonso, surnamed the Magnanimous, was one of the most brilliant and romantic personages of the fifteenth century. Historians are never weary of relating his victories over Caldora and Francesco Sforza, the coup-de-main by which he expelled his rival René, and the fascination which he exercised in Milan, while a captive, over the jealous spirit of Filippo Maria Visconti.<sup>24</sup> Scholars are no less profuse in their praises of his virtues, the justice, humanity, religion, generosity, and culture which rendered him pre-eminent among the princes of that splendid period.<sup>25</sup> His love of learning was a passion. Whether at home in the retirement of his palace, or in his tent during war, he was always attended by students, who read aloud and commented on Livy, Seneca, or the Bible. No prince was more profuse in his presents to learned men. Bartolommeo Fazio received 500 ducats a year for the composi-

<sup>23</sup> Those who are curious to trace the history of the origin of syphilis should study the article upon the subject in Von Hirsch, *Historische-geographische Pathologie* (Erlangen, 1860), and in Rosenbaum, *Geschichte der Lustseuche im Alterthum* (Halle, 1845). Some curious contemporary observations concerning the rapid diffusion of the disease in Italy, its symptoms, and its cure, are contained in Matarazzo's *Cronaca di Perugia* (*Arch. Stor. It.* vol. xvi. part. ii. pp. 32-36), and in Portovenere (*Arch. St.* vol. vi. pt. ii. p. 338). The celebrated poem of Fracastorius deserves to be read both for its fine Latinity and for its information. One of the earliest works issued from the Aldine press in 1497 was the *Libellus de Epidemia quam vulgo morbum Gallicum vocant*. It was written by Nicolao Leonicensio, and dedicated to the Count Francesco de la Mirandola.

<sup>24</sup> Mach. *Ist. Fior.* lib. v. cap. 5. Corio, pp. 332, 333, may be consulted upon the difficulties which Alfonso overcame at the commencement of his conquest. Defeated by the Genoese near the Isle of Ponza, and carried a prisoner to Milan, he succeeded in proving to Filippo Visconti that it was more to his interest to have him king of Naples than to keep the French there. Upon this the Duke of Milan restored him with honour to his throne, and confirmed him in the conquest which before he had successfully opposed. It is a singular instance of the extent to which Italian princes were controlled by policy and reason.

<sup>25</sup> Vespasiano's *Life of Alfonso* (*Vite di Uomini Illustri*, pp. 48-72) is a model of agreeable composition and vivid delineation. It is written of course from the scholar's more than the politician's point of view. Compare with it Giovio, *Elogia*, and Pontanus, *de Liberalitate*.

tion of his histories, and when, at their conclusion, the scholar asked for a further gift of 200 or 300 florins, the prince bestowed upon him 1,500. The year he died, Alfonso distributed 20,000 ducats to men of letters alone. This immoderate liberality is the only vice of which he is accused. It bore its usual fruits in the disorganization of finance.

The generous humanity of Alfonso endeared him greatly to the Neapolitans. During the half-century in which so many Italian princes succumbed to the dagger of their subjects, he, in Naples, where, according to Pontano, 'nothing was cheaper than the life of a man,' walked up and down unarmed and unattended. 'Why should a father fear among his children?' he was wont to say in answer to suggestions of the danger of this want of caution. The many splendid qualities by which he was distinguished were enhanced rather than obscured by the romance of his private life. Married to Margaret of Castile, he had no legitimate children; Ferdinand, with whom he shared the government of Naples in 1443, and whom he designated as his successor in 1458, was supposed to be his son by Margaret de Hajar. It was even whispered that this Ferdinand was the child of Catherine, the wife of Alfonso's brother Henry, whom Margaret, to save the honour of the king, acknowledged as her own. Whatever may have been the truth of this dark history, it was known for certain that the queen had murdered her rival, the unhappy Margaret de Hajar, and that Alfonso never forgave her or would look upon her from that day. Pontano, who was Ferdinand's secretary, told a different tale. He affirmed that the real father of the Duke of Calabria was a Marrano of Valentia. This last story is rendered probable by the brusque contrast between the character of Alfonso and that of Ferdinand.

It would be terrible to think that such a father could have been the parent of such a son. In Ferdinand the instinct of liberal culture degenerated into vulgar magnificence; courtesy and confidence gave place to cold suspicion and brutal cruelty. His ferocity bordered upon madness. He used to keep the victims of his hatred in cages, where their misery afforded him the same delight as some men derived from watching the antics of monkeys.<sup>26</sup> In his hunting establishment were repeated the worst atrocities of Bernabo Visconti: wretches mutilated for neglect of his hounds extended their handless stumps for charity to the travellers through his villages.<sup>27</sup> Instead of the generosity for which Alfonso had been famous, Ferdinand developed all the arts of avarice.

<sup>26</sup> See Pontanus, *de Immanitate*, Aldus, 1518, vol. i. p. 318: 'Ferdinandus Rex Neapolitanorum præclaros etiam viros conclusos carcere etiam bene atque abunde pascebat, eandem ex iis voluptatem capiens quam pueri e conclusis in caveâ aviculis: quâ de re sæpenumero sibi ipsi inter intimos suos diu multumque gratulatus subblanditusque in risum tandem ac cachinnos profundeabatur.'

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 320: 'Ferd. R. N. qui cervum aprumve occidissent furtimve palamve alios remo addixit, alios manibus mutilavit, alios suspendio affecit: agros quoque serendos interdixit dominis, legendasque aut glandes aut poma, quæ servari quidem volebat in escam feris ad venationis suæ usum.'

Like Sixtus IV. he made the sale of corn and oil a royal monopoly, trafficking in the hunger of his subjects.<sup>28</sup> Like Alexander VI. he fattened his viziers and secretaries upon the profits of extortion which he shared with them, and when they were fully gorged he cut their throats and proclaimed himself the heir through their attainer.<sup>29</sup> Alfonso had been famous for his candour and sincerity. Ferdinand was a demon of dissimulation and treachery. His murder of his guest Jacopo Piccinino at the end of a festival, which extended over twenty-seven days of varied entertainments, won him the applause of Machiavellian spirits throughout Italy. It realised the ideal of treason conceived as a fine art. Not less perfect as a specimen of diabolical cunning was the vengeance which Ferdinand, counselled by his son Alfonso, inflicted on the barons who conspired against him.<sup>30</sup> Alfonso was a son worthy of this terrible father. The only difference between them was that Ferdinand dissembled, while Alfonso, whose bravery at Otranto against the Turks had surrounded him with military glory, abandoned himself with cynicism to his passions. Sketching characters of both in the same paragraph, de Comines writes: 'Never was man more cruel than Alfonso, nor more vicious, nor more wicked, nor more poisonous, nor more gluttonous. His father was more dangerous, because he could conceal his mind and even his anger from sight; in the midst of festivity he would take and slaughter his victims by treachery. Grace or mercy was never found in him, nor yet compassion for his poor people. Both of them laid forcible hands on women. In matters of the Church they observed no reverence nor obedience. They sold bishoprics, like that of Tarento, which Ferdinand disposed of for 13,000 ducats to a Jew in favour of his son whom he called a Christian.'

This kind of tyranny carried in itself its own death-warrant. It needed not the voice of Savonarola to proclaim that God would revenge the crimes of Ferdinand by placing a new sovereign on his throne. It was commonly believed that the old king died in 1494 of remorse and apprehension, when he knew that the French expedition could no longer be delayed. Alfonso, for his part, bold general in the field and able man of affairs as he might be, found no courage to resist the conqueror. It is no fiction of a poet or a moralist, but plain fact of history, that this King of Naples, grandson of the great Alfonso and father of the Ferdinand to be, quailed before the myriads of accusing dead that rose to

<sup>28</sup> Caracciolo, *de Varietate Fortuna*, Muratori, vol. xxii. p. 87, exposes this system in a passage which should be compared with Infessura on the practices of Sixtus. De Comines, lib. vii. cap. 11, may be read with profit on the same subject.

<sup>29</sup> See Carracciolo, loc. cit. pp. 88, 89, concerning the judicial murder of Francesco Coppola and Antonello Perucci, both of whom had been raised to eminence by Ferdinand, used through their lives as the instruments of his extortion, and murdered by him in their rich old age.

<sup>30</sup> See De Comines lib. vii. cap. 11; Sismondi, vol. vii. p. 229. Read also the short account of the massacre of the Barons given in the *Chronicon Venetum*, Muratori, xxiv. p. 15, where the intense loathing felt throughout Italy for Ferdinand and his son Alfonso is powerfully expressed.

haunt his tortured fancy in the supreme hour of peril. The chambers of his palace in Naples were thronged with ghosts by battalions, pale spectres of the thousands he had reduced to starvation, bloody phantoms of the barons he had murdered after nameless tortures, thin wraiths of those who had wasted away in dungeons under his remorseless rule. The people around his gates muttered in rebellion. He abdicated in favour of his son, took ship for Sicily, and died there conscience-stricken in a convent ere the year was out.

Ferdinand, a brave youth, beloved by the nation in spite of his father's and grandfather's tyranny, reigned in his stead. Yet even for him the situation was untenable. Everywhere he was beset by traitors—by his whole army at San Germano, by Trivulzi at Capua, by the German guide at Naples. Without soldiers, without allies, with nothing to rely upon but the untried goodwill of subjects who had just reason to execrate his race, and with the conquerors of Italy advancing daily through his states, retreat alone was left to him. After abandoning his castles to pillage, burning the ships in the harbour of Naples, and setting Don Federigo together with the Queen dowager and the Princess Joanna upon a quick-sailing galley, Ferdinand bade farewell to his kingdom. Historians relate that as the shore receded from his view he kept intoning in a loud voice this verse of the 127th Psalm: 'Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.' Between the beach of Naples and the rocky shore of Ischia, for which the exiles were bound, there is only the distance of some seventeen miles. It was in February, a month of mild and melancholy sunshine in those southern regions, when the whole bay of Naples with its belt of distant hills is wont to take one tint of modulated azure, that the royal fugitives performed this voyage. Over the sleeping sea they glided; while from the galley's stern the king, with a voice as sad as Boabdil's when he sat down to weep for Granada, cried: 'Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.'

There was no want of courage in the youth. By his simple presence he had intimidated a mob of rebels in Naples. By the firmness of his carriage he subdued the insolent governor of Ischia, and made himself master of the island. There he waited till the storm was overpast. Ten times more a man than Charles, he watched the French King depart from Naples leaving scarcely a rack behind—some troops decimated by disease and unnerved by debauchery, and a general or two without energy or vigour. Then he returned and entered on a career of greater popularity than could have been enjoyed by him if the French had never made the fickle race of Naples feel how far more odious is a foreign than a familiar yoke.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>31</sup> The misfortunes and the bravery of this young prince inspire a deep feeling of interest. It is sad to read that after recovering his kingdom in 1406, he died in his twenty-eighth year, worn out with fatigue and with the pleasures of his marriage to his aunt Joanna, whom he loved too passionately. His uncle Frederick, the brother of Alfonso II., succeeded to the throne. Thus in three years Naples had five sovereigns.



Charles entered Naples as a conqueror or liberator on February 22, 1495. He was welcomed and fêted by the Neapolitans, than whom no people are more childishly delighted with a change of masters. He enjoyed his usual sports, and indulged in his usual love-affairs. With suicidal insolence and want of policy he alienated the sympathies of the noble families by dividing the titles, offices, and fiefs of the kingdom among his retinue.<sup>32</sup> Without receiving so much as a provisional investiture from the Pope, he satisfied his vanity by parading on May 12 as sovereign, with a ball in one hand and a sceptre in the other, through the city. Then he was forced to return upon his path and to seek France with the precipitancy he had shown in gaining Naples. Alexander, who was witty, said the French had conquered Italy with lumps of chalk and wooden spurs, because they rode unarmed in slippers and sent couriers before them to select their quarters. It remained to be seen that the achievements of this conquest could be effaced as easily as a chalk mark is rubbed out, or a pair of wooden spurs are broken.

While Charles was amusing himself at Naples, a storm was gathering in his rear. A league against him had been formed in April by the great Powers of Europe. Venice, alarmed for the independence of Italy, and urged by the Sultan, who had reason to dread Charles VIII.,<sup>33</sup> headed the league. Lodovico, now that he had attained his selfish object in the quiet possession of Milan, was anxious for his safety. The Pope still feared a general council. Maximilian, who could not forget the slight put upon him in the matter of his daughter and his bride, was willing to co-operate against his rival. Ferdinand and Isabella, having secured themselves in Roussillon, thought it behoved them to re-establish Spaniards of their kith and kin in Naples. Each of the contracting parties had his rôle assigned to him. Spain undertook to aid Ferdinand of Aragon in Calabria. Venice was to attack the seaports of the kingdom; Lodovico Sforza, to occupy Asti; the King of the Romans, to make a diversion in the North. Florence alone, though deeply injured by Charles in the matter of Pisa, kept faith with the French.

The danger was imminent. Already Ferdinand the Catholic had disembarked troops on the shore of Sicily, and was ready to throw an army into the ports of Reggio and Tropea. Alexander had refused to carry out his treaty by the surrender of Spoleto. Cesare Borgia had escaped from the French camp. The Lombards were menacing Asti, which the Duke of Orleans held, and without the possession of which there was no safe return to France. Asti indeed at this juncture would have fallen, and Charles would have been caught in a trap, if the

<sup>32</sup> 'Tous estats et offices furent donnez aux François, à deux ou trois,' says De Comines.

<sup>33</sup> Charles, by an act dated A.D. 1494, September 6, had bought the title of Emperor of Constantinople and Trebizond from Andrew Palæologus (see Gibbon, vol. viii. p. 183, ed. Milman). When he took Djem from Alexander in Rome, his object was to make use of him in a war against Bajazet; and the Pope was always impressing on the Turk the peril of a Frankish crusade.

Venetians had only been quick or wary enough to engage German mercenaries.<sup>34</sup> The danger of the situation may best be judged by reading the Memoirs of De Comines, who was then ambassador at Venice. 'The league was concluded very late one evening. The next morning the Signory sent for me earlier than usual. They were assembled in great numbers, perhaps a hundred or more, and held their heads high, made a good cheer, and had not the same countenance as on the day when they told me of the capture of the citadel of Naples.<sup>35</sup> My heart was heavy, and I had grave doubts about the person of the king and about all his company; and I thought their scheme more ripe than it really was, and feared they might have Germans ready: and if it had been so, never could the king have got safe out of Italy.' Nevertheless De Comines put a brave face on the matter, and told the council that he had already received information of the league and had sent despatches to his master on the subject.<sup>36</sup> 'After dinner,' continues De Comines, 'all the ambassadors of the league met for an excursion on the water, which is the chief recreation at Venice, where everyone goes according to the retinue he keeps, or at the expense of the Signory. There may have been as many as forty gondolas, all bearing displayed the arms of their masters upon banners. I saw the whole of this company pass before my windows, and there were many minstrels on board. Those of Milan, one at least of them who had often kept my company, put on a brave face not to know me; and for three days I remained without going forth into the town, nor my people, nor was there all that time a single courteous word said to me or to any of my suite.'

Returning northward by the same route, Charles passed Rome and reached Siena on June 13. The Pope had taken refuge, first at Orvieto, and afterwards at Perugia, on his approach; but he made no concessions. Charles could not obtain from him an investiture of the kingdom he pretended to have conquered, while he had himself to surrender the fortresses of Civita Vecchia and Terracina. Ostia alone remained in the clutch of Alexander's implacable enemy, the Cardinal de la Rovere. In Tuscany the Pisan question was again opened. The French army desired to see the liberties of Pisa established on a solid basis before they quitted Italy. On their way to Naples the misfortunes of that ancient city had touched them: now on their return they were clamorous that Charles should guarantee its freedom. But to secure this object was an affair of difficulty. The forces of the league had already

<sup>34</sup> See De Comines, lib. vii. cap. 15, pp. 78, 79.

<sup>35</sup> De Comines' account of the alarm felt at Venice on that occasion is very graphic: 'They sent for me one morning, and I found them to the number of fifty or sixty in the Doge's bedchamber, for he was ill of colic; and there he told me the news with a good countenance. But none of the company knew so well how to feign as he. Some were seated on a wooden bench, leaning their heads on their hands, and others otherwise; and all showed great heaviness at heart. I think that when the news reached Rome of the battle of Cannæ, the senators were not more confounded or frightened.'

<sup>36</sup> Bembo, in his *Venetian History* (lib. ii. p. 32), tells a different tale. He represents De Comines quite unnerved by the news.

taken the field, and the Duke of Orleans was being besieged in Novaro. The Florentines, jealous of the favour shown, in manifest infringement of their rights, to citizens whom they regarded as rebellious bondsmen, assumed an attitude of menace. Charles could only reply with vague promises to the solicitations of the Pisans, strengthen the French garrisons in their fortresses, and march forward as quickly as possible into the Apennines. The key of the pass by which he sought to regain Lombardy is the town of Pontremoli. Leaving that in ashes on June 29, the French army distressed for provisions and in peril among those melancholy hills, pushed onward with all speed. They knew that the allied forces, commanded by the Marquis of Mantua, were waiting for them at the other side upon the Taro, near the village of Fornovo. Here, if anywhere, the French ought to have been crushed. They numbered about 9,000 men in all, while the allies were close upon 40,000. The French were weary with long marches, insufficient food, and bad lodgings. The Italians were fresh and well cared for. Yet in spite of all this, in spite of blind generalship and total blundering, Charles continued to play his part of fortune's favourite to the end. A bloody battle, which lasted for an hour, took place upon the banks of the Taro.<sup>37</sup> The Italians suffered so severely that, though they still far outnumbered the French, no persuasions could make them rally and renew the fight. Charles in his own person ran great peril during this battle; and when it was over, he had still to effect his retreat upon Asti in the teeth of a formidable army. The good luck of the French and the dilatory cowardice of their opponents saved them now again for the last time. On July 15, Charles at the head of his little force marched into Asti and was practically safe. Here the young king continued to give signal proofs of his weakness. Though he knew that the Duke of Orleans was hard pressed in Novara, he made no effort to relieve him; nor did he attempt to use the 20,000 Switzers who descended from their Alps to aid him in the struggle with the league. From Asti he removed to Turin, where he spent his time in flirting with Anna Soléri, the daughter of his host. This girl had been sent to harangue him with a set oration, and had fulfilled her task, in the words of an old witness, 'without wavering, coughing, spitting, or giving way at all.' Her charms delayed the king in Italy until October 19, when he signed a

<sup>37</sup> The action at Fornovo lasted a quarter of an hour, according to De Comines. The pursuit of the Italians occupied about three-quarters of an hour more. Unaccustomed to the quick tactics of the French, the Italians, when once broken, persisted in retreating upon Reggio and Parma. The Gonzaghi alone distinguished themselves for obstinate courage, and lost four or five members of their princely house. The Stradiots, whose scimitars ought to have dealt rudely with the heavy French men-at-arms, employed their time in pillaging the Royal pavilion, very wisely abandoned to their avarice by the French captains. To such an extent were military affairs misconstrued in Italy, that, on the strength of this brigandage, the Venetians claimed Fornovo for a victory. See my essay 'Fornovo,' in *Sketches and Studies in Italy*, for a description of the ground on which the battle was fought.

treaty at Vercelli with the Duke of Milan. At this moment Charles might have held Italy in his grasp. His forces, strengthened by the unexpected arrival of so many Switzers, and by a junction with the Duke of Orleans, would have been sufficient to overwhelm the army of the league, and to intimidate the faction of Ferdinand in Naples. Yet so light-minded was Charles, and so impatient were his courtiers, that he now only cared for a quick return to France. Reserving to himself the nominal right of using Genoa as a naval station, he resigned that town to Lodovico Sforza, and confirmed him in the tranquil possession of his Duchy. On October 22 he left Turin, and entered his own dominions through the Alps of Dauphiné. Already his famous conquest of Italy was reckoned among the wonders of the past, and his sovereignty over Naples had become the shadow of a name. He had obtained for himself nothing but momentary glory, while he imposed on France a perilous foreign policy, and on Italy the burden of bloody warfare in the future.

A little more than a year had elapsed between the first entry of Charles into Lombardy and his return to France. Like many other brilliant episodes of history, this conquest, so showy and so ephemeral, was more important as a sign than as an actual event. 'His passage,' says Guicciardini, 'was the cause not only of change in states, downfalls of kingdoms, desolations of whole districts, destructions of cities, barbarous butcheries; but also of new customs, new modes of conduct, new and bloody habits of war, diseases hitherto unknown. The organisation upon which the peace and harmony of Italy depended was so upset that, since that time, other foreign nations and barbarous armies have been able to trample her under foot and to ravage her at pleasure.' The only error of Guicciardini is the assumption that the holiday excursion of Charles VIII. was in any deep sense the cause of these calamities.<sup>38</sup> In truth the French invasion opened a new era for the Italians, but only in the same sense as a pageant may form the prelude to a tragedy. Every monarch of Europe, dazzled by the splendid display of Charles and forgetful of its insignificant results, began to look with greedy eyes upon the wealth of the peninsula. The Swiss found in those rich provinces an inexhaustible field for depredation. The Germans, under the pretence of religious zeal, gave a loose rein to their animal appetites in the metropolis of Christendom. France and Spain engaged in a duel to the death for the possession of so fair a prey. The French, maddened by mere cupidity, threw away those chances which the

<sup>38</sup> Guicciardini's *Dialogo del Reggimento di Firenze* (Op. Ined. vol. ii. p. 94) sets forth the state of internal anarchy and external violence which followed the departure of Charles VIII., with wonderful acuteness. 'Se per sorte l'uno Oltramontano caccerà l' altro, Italia resterà in estrema servitù,' is an exact prophecy of what happened before the end of the sixteenth century, when Spain had beaten France in the duel for Italy.

goodwill of the race at large afforded them.<sup>39</sup> Louis XII. lost himself in petty intrigues, by which he finally weakened his own cause to the profit of the Borgias and Austria. Francis I. foamed his force away like a spent wave at Marignano and Pavia. The real conqueror of Italy was Charles V. Italy in the sixteenth century was destined to receive the impress of the Spanish spirit, and to bear the yoke of Austrian dukes. Hand in hand with political despotism marched religious tyranny. The Counter-Reformation over which the Inquisition presided was part and parcel of the Spanish policy for the enslavement of the nation no less than for the restoration of the Church. Meanwhile the weakness, discord, egotism, and corruption which prevented the Italians from resisting the French invasion in 1494, continued to increase. Instead of being lessoned by experience, Popes, Princes, and Republics vied with each other in calling in the strangers, pitting Spaniard against Frenchman, and paying the Germans to expel the Swiss, oblivious that each new army of foreigners they summoned was in reality a new swarm of devouring locusts. In the midst of this anarchy it is laughable to hear the shrill voice of priests, like Julius and Leo, proclaiming before God their vows to rid Italy of the barbarians. The confusion was tenfold confounded when the old factions of Guef and Ghibelline put on a new garb of French and Spanish partisanship. Town fought with town and family with family, in the cause of strangers whom they ought to have resisted with one will and steady hatred. The fascination of fear and the love of novelty alike swayed the fickle population of Italian cities. The foreign soldiers who inflicted on the nation such cruel injuries made a grand show in their streets, and there will always be a mob so childish as to covet pageants at the expense of freedom and even of safety.

In spite of its transitory character the invasion of Charles VIII., therefore, was a great fact in the history of the Renaissance. It was, to use the pregnant phrase of Michelet, no less than the revelation of Italy to the nations of the North. Like a gale sweeping across a forest of trees in blossom, and bearing their fertilising pollen, after it has broken and deflowered their branches, to far-distant trees that hitherto

<sup>39</sup> Matarazzo, in his *Cronaca della Città di Perugia* (*Arch. St.*, vol. xvi. part 2, p. 23) gives a lively picture of the eagerness with which the French were greeted in 1495, and of the wanton brutality by which they soon alienated the people. In this he agrees almost textually with De Comines, who writes: 'Le peuple nous advoit comme Saints, estimans en nous toute foy et bonté; mais ce propos ne leur dura gueres, tant pour nostre desordre et pillerie, et qu'aussi les ennemis oppreschoient le peuple en tous quartiers,' &c., lib. vii. cap. 6. In the first paragraph of the *Chronicon Venetum* (Muratori, vol. xxiv. p. 5), we read concerning the advent of Charles: 'I popoli tutti dicevano *Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini*. Nè v'era alcuno che li potesse contrastare nè resistere, tanto era da tutti i popoli Italiani chiamato.' The Florentines, as burghers, of a Guef city, were always loyal to the French. Besides, their commerce with France (e.g. the wealth of Filippo Strozzi) made it to their interest to favour the cause of the French. See Guicc. i. 2, p. 62. This loyalty rose to enthusiasm under the influence of Savonarola, survived the stupidities of Charles VIII. and Louis XII., and committed the Florentines in 1528 to the perilous policy of expecting aid from Francis I.

have bloomed in barrenness, the storm of Charles's army carried far and wide through Europe thought-dust, imperceptible, but potent to enrich the nations. The French alone, says Michelet, understood Italy. How terrible would have been a conquest by Turks with their barbarism, of Spaniards with their Inquisition, of Germans with their brutality! But France, impressible, sympathetic, ardent for pleasure, generous, amiable and vain, was capable of comprehending the Italian spirit. From the Italians the French communicated to the rest of Europe what we call the movement of the Renaissance. There is some truth in this panegyric of Michelet's. The passage of the army of Charles VIII. marks a turning-point in modern history, and from this epoch dates the diffusion of a spirit of culture over Europe. But Michelet forgets to notice that the French never rightly understood their vocation with regard to Italy. They had it in their power to foster that free spirit which might have made her a nation capable, in concert with France, of resisting Charles V. Instead of doing so, they pursued the pettiest policy of avarice and egotism. Nor did they prevent that Spanish conquest the horrors of which their historian has so eloquently described. Again, we must remember that it was the Spaniards and not the French who saved Italy from being barbarised by the Turk.

For the historian of Italy it is sad and humiliating to have to acknowledge that her fate depended wholly on the action of more powerful nations, that she lay inert and helpless at the discretion of the conqueror in the duels between Spain and France and Spain and Islam. Yet this is the truth. It would seem that those peoples to whom we chiefly owe advance in art and knowledge, are often thus the captives of their intellectual inferiors. Their spiritual ascendancy is purchased at the expense of political solidity and national prosperity. This was the case with Greece, with Judah, and with Italy. The civilisation of the Italians, far in advance of that of other European nations, unnerved them in the conflict with robust barbarian races. Letters and the arts and the civilities of life were their glory. 'Indolent princes and most despicable arms' were their ruin. Whether the Renaissance of the modern world would not have been yet more brilliant if Italy had remained free, who shall say? The very conditions which produced her culture seem to have rendered that impossible.

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX I

*Blood-madness.* See Chapter iii. p. 56.

ONE of the most striking instances afforded by history of Hæmatomania in a tyrant is Ibrahim ibn Ahmed, prince of Africa and Sicily (A. D. 875). This man, besides displaying peculiar ferocity in his treatment of enemies and prisoners of war, delighted in the execution of horrible butcheries within the walls of his own palace. His astrologers having once predicted that he should die by the hands of a 'small assassin,' he killed off the whole retinue of his pages, and filled up their places with a suite of negroes whom he proceeded to treat after the same fashion. On another occasion, when one of his three hundred eunuchs had by chance been witness of the tyrant's drunkenness, Ibrahim slaughtered the whole band. Again, he is said to have put an end to sixty youths, originally selected for his pleasures, burning them by gangs of five or six in the furnace, or suffocating them in the hot chambers of his baths. Eight of his brothers were murdered in his presence; and when one, who was so diseased that he could scarcely stir, implored to be allowed to end his days in peace, Ibrahim answered: 'I make no exceptions.' His own son Abu l-Aghlab was beheaded by his orders before his eyes; and the execution of chamberlains, secretaries, ministers, and courtiers was of common occurrence. But his fiercest fury was directed against women. He seems to have been darkly jealous of the perpetuation of the human race. Wives and concubines were strangled, sawn asunder, and buried alive if they showed signs of pregnancy. His female children were murdered as soon as they saw the light; sixteen of them, whom his mother managed to conceal and rear at her own peril, were massacred upon the spot when Ibrahim discovered whom they claimed as father. Contemporary Arab chroniclers, pondering upon the fierce and gloomy passions of this man, arrived at the conclusion that he was the subject of a strange disease, a portentous secretion of black bile producing the melancholy which impelled him to atrocious crimes. Nor does the principle on which this diagnosis of his case was founded appear unreasonable. Ibrahim was a great general, an able ruler, a man of firm and steady purpose; not a weak and ineffectual libertine whom lust for blood and lechery had placed below the level of brute beasts. When the time for his



abdication arrived, he threw aside his mantle of state and donned the mean garb of an Arab devotee, preached a crusade, and led an army into Italy, where he died of dysentery before the city of Cosenza. The only way of explaining his eccentric thirst for slaughter is to suppose that it was a dark monomania, a form of psychopathy analogous to that which we find in the Maréchal de Retz and the Marquise de Brinvilliers. One of the most marked symptoms of this disease was the curiosity which led him to explore the entrails of his victims, and to feast his eyes upon their quivering hearts. After causing his first minister Ibn-Semsâma to be beaten to death, he cut his body open, and with his own knife sliced the brave man's heart. On another occasion he had 500 prisoners brought before him. Seizing a sharp lance he first explored the region of the ribs, and then plunged the spear-point into the heart of each victim in succession. A garland of these hearts was made and hung up on the gate of Tunis. The Arabs regarded the heart as the seat of thought in man, the throne of the will, the centre of intellectual existence. In this preoccupation with the hearts of his victims we may therefore trace the jealousy of human life which Ibrahim displayed in his murder of pregnant women, as well as a tyrant's fury against the organ which had sustained his foes in their resistance. We can only comprehend the combination of sanguinary lust with Ibrahim's vigorous conduct of civil and military affairs, on the hypothesis that this man-tiger, as Amari, to whom I owe these details, calls him, was possessed with a specific madness.

## APPENDIX II

*Nardi, Istorie di Frieuze, lib. i. cap. 4.* See Chap. iv. p. 99.

AFTER the freedom regained by the expulsion of the Duke of Athens and the humbling of the nobles, regularity for the future in the government might have been expected, since a very great equality among the burghers had been established in consequence of those troubles. The city too had been divided into quarters, and the supreme magistracy of the republic assigned to the eight priors, called *Signori Priori di libertà*, together with the Gonfalonier of Justice. The eight priors were chosen, two for each quarter; the Gonfalonier, their chief, differed in no respect from his colleagues save in precedence of dignity; and as the fourth part of the honours pertained to the members of the lesser arts, their turn kept coming round to that quarter to which the Gonfalonier belonged. This magistracy remained for two whole months, always living and sleeping in the Palace; in order that, according to the notion of our ancestors, they might be able to attend with greater diligence to the affairs of the commonwealth, in concert with their colleagues, who were the sixteen gonfaloniers of the companies of the people, and the twelve *buoni uomini*, or special advisers of the Signory. These magistrates collectively in one body were called the College, or else the Signory and the Colleagues. After this magistracy came the Senate, the number of which varied, and the name of which was altered several times up to the year 1494, according to circumstances. The larger councils, whose business it was to discuss and make the laws and all provisions both general and particular, were until that date two; the one called the Council of the people, formed only by the *cittadini popolari*, and the other the Council of the Commune, because it embraced both nobles and plebeians from the date of the formation of these councils.<sup>1</sup> The appointment of the magistrates, which of old times and under the best and most equitable governments was made on the occasion of each election, in this more modern period was consigned to a special council called *Squittino*.<sup>2</sup> The mode and act of the election was termed *Squittinare*, which is equivalent to *Scrutinium* in the Latin tongue, because minute investigation was made into the qualities of the eligible burghers. This method, however, tended greatly to corrupt the good manners of the city, inasmuch as, the said scrutiny

<sup>1</sup> Lorenzo de' Medici superseded these two councils by the Council of the Seventy, without, however, suppressing them.

<sup>2</sup> A corruption of Scrutinio.

being made every three or five years, and not on each occasion, as would have been right, considering the present quality of the burghers and the badness of the times, those who had once obtained their nomination and been put into the purses thereto appointed, being certain to arrive some time at the honours and offices for which they were designed, became careless and negligent of good customs in their lives. The proper function of the Gonfaloniers was in concert with their Gonfalons and companies, to defend with arms the city from perils foreign and civil, when occasion rose, and to control the fire-guards specially deputed by that magistracy in four convenient stations. All the laws and provisions, as well private as public, proposed by the Signory, had to be approved and carried by that College, then by the Senate, and lastly by the Councils named above. Notwithstanding this rule, everything of high importance pertaining to the State was discussed and carried into execution during the whole time that the Medici administered the city by the Council vulgarly called *Balia*, composed of men devoted to that government. While the Medici held sway, the magistracy of the *Dieci della Guerra* or of Liberty and Peace were superseded by the *Otto della Pratica* in the conduct of all that concerned wars, truces, and treaties of peace, in obedience to the will of the chief agents of that government. The *Otto di guardia e balia* were then as now delegated to criminal business, but they were appointed by the forenamed Council of *Balia*, or rather such authority and commission was assigned them by the Signory, and this usage was afterwards continued on their entry into office. Let this suffice upon these matters. Now the burghers who have the right of discussing and determining the affairs of the republic were and still are called privileged *benefiziati* or *statuali*, of that quality and condition to which, according to the laws of our city, the government belongs; in other words they are eligible for office, as distinguished from those who have not this privilege. Consequently the *benefiziati* and *statuali* of Florence correspond to the *gentiluomini* of Venice. Of these burghers there were about 400 families or houses, but at different times the number was larger, and before the plague of 1527 they made up a total of about 4,000 citizens eligible for the Consiglio Grande. During the period of freedom between 1494 and 1512 the other or non-privileged citizens could be elevated to this rank of enfranchisement according as they were judged worthy by the Council; at the present time they gain the same distinction by such merits as may be pleasing to the ruler of the city for the time being: our commonwealth from the year 1433 having been governed according to the will of its own citizens, though one faction has from time to time prevailed over another, and though before that date the republic was distressed and shaken by the divisions which affected the whole of Italy, and by many others which are rather to be reckoned as sedition peculiar and natural to free cities. Seeing that men by good and evil arts in combination are always striving to attain the summit of human affairs, together also with the favour of fortune, who ever insists on having her part in our actions.

*Varchi: Storia Fiorentina, lib. iii. caps. 20, 21, 22.*

THE whole city of Florence is divided into four quarters, the first of which takes in the whole of that part which is now called Beyond the Arno, and the chief church of the district gives it the name of Santo Spirito. The other three, which embrace all that is called This side the Arno, also take their names from their chief churches, and are the Quarters of Sta. Croce, Sta. Maria Novella, and San Giovanni. Each of these four quarters is divided into four gonfalons, named after the different animals or other things they carry painted on their ensigns. The quarter of Santo Spirito includes the gonfalons of the Ladder, the Shell, the Whip, and the Dragon; that of Santa Croce, the Car, the Ox, the Golden Lion, and the Wheels; that of Santa Maria Novella, the Viper, the Unicorn, the Red Lion, and the White Lion; that of San Giovanni, the Black Lion, the Dragon, the Keys, and the Vair. Now all the households and families of Florence are included and classified under these four quarters and sixteen gonfalons, so that there is no burgher of Florence who does not rank in one of the four quarters and one of the sixteen gonfalons. Each gonfalon had its standard-bearer who carried the standard like captains of bands and their chief office was to run with arms whenever they were called by the Gonfalonier of Justice, and to defend, each under his own ensign, the palace of the Signory, and to fight for the people's liberty; wherefore they were called Gonfaloniers of the companies of the people, or more briefly, from their number, the Sixteen. Now since they never assembled by themselves alone, seeing that they could not propose or carry any measure without the Signory, they were also called the Colleagues, that is, the companions of the Signory, and their title was venerable. This, after the Signory, was the first and most honourable magistracy of Florence; and after them came the Twelve Buonuomini, also called, for the like reason, Colleagues. So the Signory with the Gonfalonier of Justice, the Sixteen, and the Twelve were called the Three Greater. No man was said to have the franchise (*aver lo stato*), and in consequence to frequent the council, or to exercise any office, whose grandfather or father had not occupied or been passed for (*seduto o veduto*) one of these three magistracies. To be passed (*veduto*) Gonfalonier or Colleague meant this: when a man's name was drawn from the purse of the Gonfaloniers or of the College to exercise the office of Gonfalonier or Colleague, but by reason of being below the legal age, or for some other cause, he never sat himself upon the Board or was in fact Gonfalonier or Colleague, he was then said to have been passed; and this held good of all the other magistracies of the city.

It should also be known that all the Florentine burghers were obliged to rank in one of the twenty-one arts: that is, no one could be a burgher of Florence unless he or his ancestors had been approved and matriculated in one of these arts, whether they practised it or no. With-

out the proof of such matriculation he could not be drawn for any office, or exercise any magistracy, or even have his name put into the bags. The arts were these: i. Judges and Notaries (for the doctors of the law were styled of old in Florence Judges); Merchants, or the Arts of; ii. Calimala,<sup>3</sup> iii. Exchange, iv. Wool; Porta Santa Maria, or the Arts of v. Silk; vi. Physicians and Apothecaries; vii. Furriers. The others were viii. Butchers, ix. Shoemakers, x. Blacksmiths, xi. Linen-drapers and Clothesmen, xii. Masters, or Masons, and Stonecutters, xiii. Vintners, xiv. Innkeepers, xv. Oilsellers, Pork-butchers, and Rope-makers, xvi. Hosiers, xvii. Armourers, xviii. Locksmiths, xix. Saddlers, xx. Carpenters, xxi. Bakers. The last fourteen were called Lesser Arts; whoever was enrolled or matriculated into one of these was said to rank with the lesser (*andare per la minore*); and though there were in Florence many other trades than these, yet having no guild of their own they were associated with one or other of those that I have named. Each art had, as may still be seen, a house or mansion, large and noble, where they assembled, appointed officers, and gave account of debit and credit to all the members of the guild.<sup>4</sup> In processions and other public assemblies the heads (for so the chiefs of the several arts were called) had their place and precedence in order. Moreover, these arts at first had each an ensign for the defence, on occasion, of liberty with arms. Their origin was when the people in 1282 overcame the nobles (*Grandi*), and passed the Ordinances of Justice against them, whereby no nobleman could exercise any magistracy; so that such of the partisans as desired to be able to hold office had to enter the ranks of the people, as did many great houses of quality, and matriculate into one of the arts. Which thing, while it partly allayed the civil strife of Florence, almost wholly extinguished all noble feeling in the souls of the Florentines; and the power and haughtiness of the city were no less abated than the insolence and pride of the nobles, who since then have never lifted up their heads again. These arts, the greater as well as the lesser, have varied in numbers at different times; and often have not only been rivals, but even foes, among themselves; so much so that the lesser arts once got it passed that the Gonfalonier should be appointed only from their body. Yet after long dispute it was finally settled that the Gonfalonier could not be chosen from the lesser, but that he should always rank with the greater, and that in all other offices and magistracies the lesser should always have a fourth and no more. Consequently of the eight Priors, two were always of the lesser; of the Twelve, three; of the Sixteen, four; and so on through all the magistracies.

As a consequence from what has been said, it is easy to perceive

<sup>3</sup> The name Calimala was given to a trade in cloth carried on at Florence by merchants who bought rough goods in France, Flanders and England, and manufactured them into more delicate materials.

<sup>4</sup> Marco Foscari, quoted lower down, estimates the property of the Arts at 200,000 ducats.

that all the inhabitants of Florence (by inhabitants I mean those only who are really settled there, for of strangers, who are passing or sojourning a while, we need not here take any account) are of two sorts. The one class are liable to taxation in Florence, that is they pay tithes of their goods, and are inscribed upon the books of the Commune, and these are called contributors. The others are not taxed nor inscribed upon the registers of the Commune, inasmuch as they do not pay the tithes or other ordinary imposts; and these are called non-contributors: who, seeing that they live by their hands, and carry on mechanical arts and the vilest trades, should be called plebians; and though they have ruled Florence more than once, ought not even to entertain a thought about public affairs in a well-governed state. The contributors are of two sorts: for some, while they pay the taxes, do not enjoy the citizenship (*i.e.* cannot attend the council or take any office); either because none of their ancestors, and in particular their father or their grandfather, has sat or been passed for any of the three greater magistracies; or else because they have not had themselves submitted to the scrutiny,<sup>5</sup> or, if they have advanced so far, have not been approved and nominated for office. These are indeed entitled citizens: but he who knows what a citizen is really, knows also that, being unable to share either the honours or the advantages of the city, they are not truly citizens; therefore let us call them burghers, without franchise. Those again who pay taxes and enjoy the citizenship (whom we will therefore call enfranchised burghers) are in like manner of two kinds. The one class, inscribed and matriculated into one of the seven first arts, are said to rank with the greater; whence we may call them Burghers of the Greater: the others, inscribed and matriculated into the fourteen lesser arts, are said to rank with the lesser; whence we may call them Burghers of the Lesser. This distinction had the Romans, but not for the same reason.

*Varchi: Storia Fiorentina, lib. ix. caps. 48, 49, 46.*

As for natural abilities, I for my part cannot believe that any one either could or ought to doubt that the Florentines, even if they do not excel all other nations, are at least inferior to none in those things to which they give their minds. In trade, whereon of a truth their city is founded, and wherein their industry is chiefly exercised, they ever have been and still are reckoned not less trusty and true than great and prudent; but besides trade, it is clear that the three most noble arts of painting, sculpture, and architecture have reached that degree of supreme excellence in which we find them now, chiefly by the toil and by the skill of the Florentines, who have beautified and adorned not only their own city but also very many others, with great glory and no small profit to themselves and to their country. And, seeing that the

<sup>5</sup> For an explanation of *Squittino* and *Squittinare*, see Nardi, p. 297 above.

fear of being held a flatterer should not prevent me from testifying to the truth, though this will turn to the highest fame and honour of my lords and patrons, I say that all Italy, nay the whole world, owes it solely to the judgment and the generosity of the Medici that Greek letters were not extinguished to the great injury of the human race, and that Latin literature was restored to the incalculable profit of all men.

I am wholly of opinion opposed to that of some, who, because the Florentines are merchants, hold them for neither noble nor high-spirited, but for tame and low.<sup>6</sup> On the contrary, I have often wondered with myself how it could be that men who have been used from their childhood upwards for a paltry profit to carry bales of wool and baskets of silk like porters, and to stand like slaves all day and great part of the night at the loom, could summon, when and where was need, such greatness of soul, such high and haughty thoughts, that they have wit and heart to say and do those many noble things we know of them. Pondering on the causes of which, I find none truer than this, that the Florentine climate, between the fine air of Arezzo and the thick air of Pisa, infuses into their breasts the temperament of which I spoke. And whoso shall well consider the nature and the ways of the Florentines, will find them born more apt to rule than to obey. Nor would it be easily believed how much was gained for the youth of Florence by the institution of the militia; for whereas many of the young men, heedless of the commonwealth and careless of themselves, used to spend all the day in idleness, hanging about places of public resort, girding at one another, or talking scandal of the passers-by, they immediately, like beasts by some benevolent Circe transformed again to men, gave all their heart and soul, regardless of peril or loss, to gaining fame and honour for themselves, and liberty and safety for their country. I do not by what I have been saying mean to deny that among the Florentines may be found men proud, ambitious, and greedy of gain; for vices will exist as long as human nature lasts: nay, rather, the ungrateful, the envious, the malicious, and the evil-minded among them are so in the highest degree, just as the virtuous are supremely virtuous. It is indeed a common proverb that Florentine brains have no mean either way; the fools are exceedingly simple, and the wise exceeding prudent.

Their mode of life is simple and frugal, but wonderfully and in-

<sup>6</sup> Compare, however, Varchi, quoted above, p. 123. The report of Marco Foscarì, *Relazioni Venete*, serie ii. vol. i. p. 9 et seq., contains a remarkable estimate of the Florentine character. He attributes the timidity and weakness which he observes in the Florentines to their mercantile habits, and notices, precisely what Varchi here observes with admiration: 'li primi che governano lo stato vanno alle loro botteghe di seta, e gittati li lembi del mantello sopra le spalle, pongonsi alla caviglia e lavorano pubblicamente che ognuno li vede; ed i figliuoli loro stanno in bottego con li grembiuli dinanzi, e portano il sacco e le sporte alle maestre con la seta e fanno gli altri esercizi di bottega.' A strong aristocratic prejudice transpires in every line. This report was written early in 1527. The events of the Siege must have surprised Marco Foscarì. He notices among other things, as a source of weakness, the country villas which were all within a few months destroyed by their armies for the public good.



credibly clean and neat; and it may be said with truth that the artisans and handicraftsmen live at Florence even better than the citizens themselves; for whereas the former change from tavern to tavern, according as they find good wine, and only think of joyous living; the latter in their homes, with the frugality of merchants, who for the most part make but do not spend money, or with the moderation of orderly burghers, never exceed mediocrity. Nevertheless there are not wanting families, who keep a splendid table and live like nobles, such as the Antinori, the Bartolini, the Tornabuoni, the Pazzi, the Borgherini, the Gaddi, the Rucellai, and among the Salviati, Piero d' Alamanno and Alamanno d' Jacopo, and some others. At Florence every one is called by his proper name or his surname: and the common usage, unless there be some marked distinction of rank or age, is to say *thou* and not *you*; only to knights, doctors, and prebendaries is the title of *messere* allowed: to doctors that of *maestro*, to monks *don* and to frairs *padre*. True, however, is it that since there was a Court at Florence, first that of Giulio, the Cardinal de' Medici, then that of the Cardinal of Cortona, which enjoyed more license than the former, the manners of the city have become more refined—or shall I say more corrupt?

### APPENDIX III

*The Character of Alexander VI., from Guicciardini's Storia Fiorentina, cap. 27. See Chap. vii. p. 207 above.*

So died Pope Alexander, at the height of glory and prosperity; about whom it must be known that he was a man of the utmost power and of great judgment and spirit, as his actions and behaviour showed. But as his first accession to the Papacy was foul and shameful, seeing he had bought with gold so high a station, in like manner his government disagreed not with this base foundation. There were in him, and in full measure, all vices both of flesh and spirit; nor could there be imagined in the ordering of the Church a rule so bad but that he put it into working. He was most sensual toward both sexes, keeping publicly women and boys, but more especially toward women; and so far did he exceed all measure that public opinion judged he knew Madonna Lucrezia, his own daughter, toward whom he bore a most tender and boundless love. He was exceedingly avaricious, not in keeping what he had acquired, but in getting new wealth: and where he saw a way toward drawing money, he had no respect whatever; in his days were sold as at auction all benefices, dispensations, pardons, bishoprics, cardinalships, and all court dignities; unto which matters he had appointed two or three men privy to his thought, exceeding prudent, who let them out to the highest bidder. He caused the death by poison of many cardinals and prelates, even among his intimates, those namely whom he noted to be rich in benefices and understood to have hoarded much, with the view of seizing on their wealth. His cruelty was great, seeing that by his direction many were put to violent death: nor was the ingratitude less with which he caused the ruin of the Sforzeschi and Colonnese, by whose favour he acquired the Papacy. There was in him no religion, no keeping of his troth: he promised all things liberally, but stood to nought but what was useful to himself: no care for justice, since in his days Rome was like a den of thieves and murderers: his ambition was boundless, and such that it grew in the same measure as his state increased: nevertheless, his sins meeting with no due punishment in this world, he was to the last of his days most prosperous. While young and still almost a boy, having Calixtus for his uncle, he was made Cardinal and then Vice-Chancellor: in which high place he continued till his papacy, with great revenue, good fame, and peace. Having become Pope, he made Cesare, his bastard son and bishop of Pampeluna, a Cardinal against the ordinances and decrees of the Church, which

forbid the making of a bastard Cardinal even with the Pope's dispensation, wherefore he brought proof by false witnesses that he was born in wedlock. Afterwards he made him a layman and took away the Cardinal's dignity from him, and turned his mind to making a realm; wherein he fared far better than he purposed, and beginning with Rome, after undoing the Orsini, Colonna, Savelli, and those barons who were wont to be held in fear by former Popes, he was more full master of Rome than ever had been any pope before. With greatest ease he got the lordships of Romagna, the March, and the Duchy; and having made a most fair and powerful state, the Florentines held him in much fear, the Venetians in jealousy, and the King of France in esteem. Then having got together a fine army, he showed how great was the might of a Pontiff when he hath a valiant general and one in whom he can place faith. At last he grew to that point that he was counted the balance in the war of France and Spain. In one word he was more evil and more lucky than ever for many ages peradventure had been any pope before.

#### APPENDIX IV

*Religious Revivals in Mediæval Italy.* See Chap. viii.

p. 247 above.

It would be unscientific to confound events of such European importance as the foundation of the orders of S. Francis and S. Dominic with the phenomena in question. Still it may be remarked, that the sudden rise and the extraordinary ascendancy of the mendicants and preachers were due in a great measure to the sensitive and lively imagination of the Italians. The Popes of the first half of the Thirteenth century were shrewd enough to discern the political and ecclesiastical importance of movements which seemed at first to owe their force to mere fanatical revivalism. They calculated on the intensely excitable temperament of the Italian nation, and employed the Franciscans and Dominicans as their militia in the crusade against the Empire and the heretics. Again, it is necessary to distinguish what was essentially national from what was common to all Europeans in the Middle Ages. Every country had its wandering hordes of flagellants and penitents, its crusaders and its pilgrims. The vast unsettled populations of mediæval Europe, haunted with the recurrent instinct of migration, and nightmare-ridden by imperious religious yearnings, poured flood after flood of fanatics upon the shores of Palestine. Half-naked savages roamed, dancing and groaning and scourging their flesh, from city to city, under the stress of semi-bestial impulses. Then came the period of organised pilgrimages. The celebrated shrines of Europe—Rome, Compostella, Monte Gargano, Canterbury—acted like lightning-conductors to the tempestuous devotion of the mediæval races, like set-ons to their over-charged imagination. In all these universal movements the Italians had their share; though being more advanced in civilisation than the Northern peoples, they turned the crusades to commercial account, and maintained some moderation in the *fakir* fury of their piety. It is not, therefore, with the general history of religious enthusiasm in the Middle Ages that we have to do, but rather with those intermittent manifestations of revivalism which were peculiar to the Italians. The chief points to be noticed are the political influence acquired by monks in some of the Italian cities, the preaching of peace and moral reformation, the panics of superstitious terror which seized upon wide districts, and the personal ascendancy of hermits unaccredited by the Church, but believed by the people to be divinely inspired.

One of the most picturesque figures of the first half of the Thirteenth

century is the Dominican monk, John of Vicenza. His order, which had recently been founded, was already engaged in the work of persecution. France was reeking with the slaughter of the Albigenses, and the stakes were smoking in the town of Milan, when this friar undertook the noble task of pacifying Lombardy. Every town in the north of Italy was at that period torn by the factions of the Guelfs and Ghibellines; private feuds crossed and intermingled with political discords; and the savage tyranny of Ezzelino had shaken the fabric of society to its foundations. It seemed utterly impossible to bring this people for a moment to agreement. Yet what popes and princes had failed to achieve, the voice of a single friar accomplished. John of Vicenza began his preaching in Bologna during the year 1233. The citizens and the country folk of the surrounding districts flocked to hear him. It was noticed with especial wonder that soldiers of all descriptions yielded to the magic of his eloquence. The themes of his discourse were invariably reconciliation and forgiveness of injuries. The heads of rival houses, who had prosecuted hereditary feuds for generations, met before his pulpit, and swore to live thenceforth in amity. Even the magistrates entreated him to examine the statutes of their city, and to point out any alterations by which the peace of the commonwealth might be assured. Having done his best for Bologna, John journeyed to Padua, where the fame of his sanctity had been already spread abroad. The *carroccio* of the city, on which the standard of Padua floated, and which had led the burghers to many a bloody battle, was sent out to meet him at Monselice, and he entered the gates in triumph. In Padua the same exhortations to peace produced the same results. Old enmities were abandoned and hands were clasped which had often been raised in fierce fraternal conflict. Treviso, Feltre, Belluno, Conegliano, and Romano, the very nests of the grim brood of Ezzelino, yielded to the charm. Verona, where the Scalas were about to reign, Vicenza, Mantua, and Brescia, all placed themselves at the disposition of the monk, and prayed him to reform their constitution. But it was not enough to restore peace to each separate community, to reconcile household with household, and to efface the miseries of civil discord. John of Vicenza aimed at consolidating the Lombard cities in one common bond. For this purpose he bade the burghers of all the towns where he had preached to meet him on the plain of Paquara, in the country of Verona. The 28th of August was the day fixed for this great national assembly. More than four hundred thousand persons, according to the computation of Parisio di Cereta, appeared upon the scene. This multitude included the populations of Verona, Mantua, Brescia, Padua and Vicenza, marshalled under their several standards, together with contingents furnished by Ferrara, Modena, Reggio, Parma, and Bologna. Nor was the assembly confined to the common folk. The bishops of these flourishing cities, the haughty Marquis of Este, the fierce lord of Romano, and the Patriarch of Aquileia, obeyed the invitation of the friar. There, on the banks of the Adige, and within sight of the Alps, John of Vicenza ascended a

pulpit that had been prepared for him and preached a sermon on the text, *Pacem meam do vobis, pacem relinquo vobis*. The horrors of war, and the Christian duty of reconciliation, formed the subject of his sermon, at the end of which he constrained the Lombards to ratify a solemn league of amity, vowing to eternal perdition all who should venture to break the same, and imprecating curses on their crops, their vines, their cattle, and everything they had. Furthermore, he induced the Marquis of Este to take in marriage a daughter of Alberico da Romano. Up to this moment John of Vicenza had made a noble use of the strange power which he possessed. But his success seems to have turned his head. Instead of confining himself to the work of pacification so well begun, he now demanded to be made lord of Vicenza, with the titles of Duke and Count, and to receive the supreme authority in Verona. The people, believing him to be a saint, readily acceded to his wishes; but one of the first things he did, after altering the statutes of these burghs, was to burn sixty citizens of Verona, whom he had himself condemned as heretics. The Paduans revolted against his tyranny. Obligated to have recourse to arms, he was beaten and put in prison; and when he was released, at the intercession of the Pope, he found his wonderful prestige annihilated.<sup>1</sup>

The position of Fra Jacopo del Bussolaro in Pavia differed from that of Fra Giovanni da Vicenza in Verona. Yet the commencement of his political authority was very nearly the same. The son of a poor box-maker of Pavia, he early took the habit of the Augustines, and acquired a reputation for sanctity by leading the austere life of a hermit. It happened in the year 1356 that he was commissioned by the superiors of his order to preach the Lenten sermons to the people of Pavia. 'Then,' to quote Matteo Villani, 'it pleased God that this monk should make his sermons so agreeable to every species of people, that the fame of them and the devotion they inspired increased marvellously. And he, seeing the concourse of the people, and the faith they bare him, began to denounce vice, and specially usury, revenge, and ill-behaviour of women; and thereupon he began to speak against the disorderly lordship of the tyrants; and in a short time he brought the women to modest manners, and the men to renunciation of usury and feuds.' The only citizens of Pavia who resisted his eloquence were the Beccaria family, who at that time ruled Pavia like despots. His most animated denunciations were directed against their extortions and excesses. Therefore they sought to slay him. But the people gave him a bodyguard, and at last he wrought so powerfully with the burghers that they expelled the house of Beccaria and established a republican government. At this time the Visconti were laying siege to Pavia; the passes of the Ticino and the Po were occupied by Milanese troops, and the city was reduced to a state of blockade. Fra Jacopo assembled the able-bodied burghers,

<sup>1</sup> The most interesting accounts of Fra Giovanni da Vicenza are to be found in Muratori, vol. viii., in the Annals of Rolandini and Gerardus Maurisius.

animated them by his eloquence, and led them to the attack of their besiegers. They broke through the lines of the beleaguering camp, and re-established the freedom of Pavia. What remained, however, of the Beccaria party passed over to the enemy, and threw the whole weight of their influence into the scale of the Visconti; so that at the end of a three years' manful conflict, Pavia was delivered to Galeazzo Visconti in 1359. Fra Jacopo made the best terms that he could for the city, and took no pains to secure his own safety. He was consigned by the conquerors to the superiors of his order, and died in the dungeons of a convent at Vercelli. In his case, the sanctity of an austere life, and the eloquence of an authoritative preacher of repentance, had been strictly subordinated to political aims in the interest of republican liberty. Fra Jacopo deserves to rank with Savonarola; like Savonarola, he fell a victim to the selfish and immoral oppressors of his country. As in the case of Savonarola, we can trace the connection which subsisted in Italy between a high standard of morality and patriotic heroism.<sup>2</sup>

San Bernardino da Massa heads a long list of preachers, who, without taking a prominent part in contemporary politics, devoted all their energies to the moral regeneration of the people. His *Life*, written by Vespasiano da Bisticci, is one of the most valuable documents which we possess for the religious history of Italy in the first half of the fifteenth century. His parents, who were people of good condition, sent him at an early age to study the Canon law at Siena. They designed him for a lucrative and important office in the Church. But, while yet a youth, he was seized with a profound conviction of the degradation of his countrymen. The sense of sin so weighed upon him that he sold all his substance, entered the order of S. Francis, and began to preach against the vices which were flagrant in the great Italian cities. After travelling through the length and breadth of the peninsula, and winning all men by the magic of his eloquence, he came to Florence. 'There,' says Vespasiano, 'the Florentines being by nature very well disposed indeed to truth, he so dealt that he changed the whole State and gave it, one may say, a second birth. And in order to abolish the false hair which the women wore, and games of chance, and other vanities, he caused a sort of large stall to be raised in the Piazza di Santa Croce, and bade every one who possessed any of these vanities to place them there; and so they did; and he set fire thereto and burned the whole.' C. Bernardino preached unremittingly for forty-two years in every quarter of Italy, and died at last worn out with fatigue and sickness. 'Of many enmities and deaths of men he wrought peace and removed deadly hatreds; and numberless princes, who harboured feuds to the death, he reconciled, and restored tranquillity to many cities and peoples.' A vivid picture of the method adopted by S. Bernardino in his dealings with these cities is presented to us by Graziani, the chronicler of Perugia: 'On Septem-

<sup>2</sup> The best authorities for the life and actions of Fra Jacopo are Matteo Villani, bks. 8 and 9, and Peter Azarius, in his *Chronicle* (Grævius, vol. ix.)



ber 23, 1425, a Sunday, there were, as far as we could reckon, upwards of 3,000 persons in the Cathedral. His sermon was from the Sacred Scripture, reproving men of every vice and sin, and teaching Christian living. Then he began to rebuke the women for their paints and cosmetics, and false hair, and such like wanton customs; and in like manner the men for their cards and dice-boards and masks and amulets and charms: insomuch that within a fortnight the women sent all their false hair and gewgaws to the Convent of S. Francis, and the men their dice, cards, and such gear, to the amount of many loads. And on October 29 Fra Bernardino collected all these devilish things on the piazza, where he erected a kind of wooden castle between the fountain and the Bishop's palace; and in this he put all the said articles, and set fire to them; and the fire was so great that none durst go near; and in the fire were burned things of the greatest value, and so great was the haste of men and women to escape that fire that many would have perished but for the quick aid of the burghers.' Together with this onslaught upon vanities, Fra Bernardino connected the preaching of peace and amity. It is noticeable that while his sermon lasted and the great bell of S. Lorenzo went on tolling, no man could be taken or imprisoned in the city of Perugia.<sup>3</sup>

The same city was the scene of many similar displays. During the fifteenth century it remained in a state of the most miserable internal discord, owing to the feuds of its noble families. Graziani gives an account of the preaching there of Fra Jacopo della Marca in 1445: on this occasion a temporary truce was patched up between old enemies, a witch was burned for the edification of the burghers, the people were reprov'd for their extravagance in dress, and two peacemakers (*pacieri*) were appointed for each gate. On March 22, after undergoing this discipline, the whole of Perugia seemed to have repented of its sins; but the first entry for April 15 is the murder of one of the Ranieri family by another man of the same house. So transitory were the effects of such revivals.<sup>4</sup> Another entry in Graziani's 'Chronicle' deserves to be noticed. He describes how, in 1448, Fra Roberto da Lecce (like S. Bernardino and Fra Jacopo della Marca, a Franciscan of the Order of Observance) came to preach in January. He was only twenty-two years of age; but his fame was so great that he drew about 15,000 persons into the piazza to listen to him. The stone pulpit, we may say in passing, is still shown, from which these sermons were delivered. It is built into the wall of the Cathedral, and commands the whole square. Roberto da Lecce began by exhibiting a crucifix, which moved the audience to tears; 'and the weeping and crying, *Jesu misericordia!* lasted about half an hour. Then he made four citizens be chosen for each gate as peacemakers.' What follows in Graziani is an

<sup>3</sup> See Vespasiano, *Vite di Uomini Illustri*, pp. 185-92. Graziani, *Archivio Storico*, vol. xvi. part i. pp. 313, 314.

<sup>4</sup> See Graziani, pp. 565-68.

account of a theatrical show, exhibited upon the steps of the Cathedral. On Good Friday the friar assembled all the citizens, and preached; and when the moment came for the elevation of the crucifix, 'there issued forth from San Lorenzo Eliseo di Christoforo, a barber of the quarter of Sant Angelo, like a naked Christ with the cross on his shoulder, and the crown of thorns upon his head, and his flesh seemed to be bruised as when Christ was scourged.' The people were immensely moved by this sight. They groaned and cried out, '*Misericordia!*' and many monks were made upon the spot. At last on April 7, Fra Roberto took his leave of the Perugians, crying as he went, '*Le pace sia con voi!*'<sup>5</sup> We have a glimpse of the same Fra Roberto da Lecce at Rome, in the year 1482. The feuds of the noble families della Croce and della Valle were then raging in the streets of Rome. On the night of April 3 they fought a pitched battle in the neighbourhood of the Pantheon, the factions of Orsini and Colonna joining in the fray. Many of the combatants were left dead before the palaces of the Vallensi; the numbers of the wounded were variously estimated; and all Rome seemed to be upon the verge of civil war. Roberto da Lecce, who was drawing large congregations, not only of the common folk, but also of the Roman prelates, to his sermons at Santa Maria sopra Minerva, interrupted his discourse upon the following Friday, and held before the people the image of their crucified Saviour entreating them to make peace. As he pleaded with them he wept; and they too fell to weeping—fierce satellites of the rival factions and worldly prelates lifting up their voice in concert with the friar who had touched their hearts.<sup>6</sup> Another member of the Franciscan Order of Observance should be mentioned after Fra Roberto. This was Giovanni da Capistrano, of whose preaching at Brescia in 1451 we have received a minute account. He brought with him a great reputation for sanctity and eloquence, and for the miraculous cures which he had wrought. The Rectors of the city, together with 300 of the most distinguished burghers upon horseback, and a crowd of well-born ladies on foot, went out to meet him on February 9. Arrangements were made for the entertainment of himself and 100 followers, at public cost. Next morning, three hours before dawn, there were already assembled upwards of 10,000 people on the piazza waiting for the preacher. 'Think, therefore,' says the 'Chronicle,' 'how many there must have been in the day time! and mark this, that they came less to hear his sermon than to see him.' As he made his way through the throng, his frock was almost torn to pieces on his back, everybody struggling to get a fragment.<sup>7</sup>

It did not always need the interposition of a friar to arouse a strong religious panic in Italian cities. After an unusually fierce bout of discord the burghers themselves would often attempt to give the sanction of solemn rites and vows before the altar to their temporary truces.

<sup>5</sup> Graziani, pp. 597-601.

<sup>6</sup> See Jacobus Volaterranus. Muratori, xxiii. pp. 126, 166, 167.

<sup>7</sup> See *Istoria Bresciana*. Muratori, xxi. 865.

Siena, which was always more disturbed by civil strife than any of her neighbours, offered a notable example of this custom in the year 1494. The factions of the Monti de' Nove and del Popolo had been raging; the city was full of feud and suspicion, and all Italy was agitated by the French invasion. It seemed good, therefore, to the heads of the chief parties that an oath of peace should be taken by the whole body of the burghers. Alleghretti's account of the ceremony, which took place at dead of night in the beautiful Cathedral of Siena, is worthy to be translated. 'The conditions of the peace were then read, which took up eight pages, together with an oath of the most horrible sort, full of maledictions, imprecations, excommunications, invocations of evil, renunciation of benefits temporal and spiritual, confiscation of goods, vows, and so many other woes that to hear it was a terror *et etiam* that *in articulo mortis* no sacrament should accrue to the salvation, but rather to the damnation, of those who might break the said conditions; insomuch that I, Alleghretto di Nanni Alleghretti, being present, believe that never was made or heard a more awful and horrible oath. Then the notaries of the Nove and the Popolo, on either side of the altar, wrote down the names of all the citizens, who swore upon the crucifix, for on each side there was one, and every couple of the one and the other faction kissed: and the bells clashed, and "Te Deum laudamus" was sung with the organs and the choir while the oath was being taken. All this happened between one and two hours of the night, with many torches lighted. Now may God will that this be peace indeed, and tranquillity for all citizens, whereof I doubt.'<sup>8</sup> The doubt of Alleghretti was but reasonable. Siena profited little by these dreadful oaths and terrifying functions. Two years later on, the same chronicler tells how it was believed that blood had rained outside the Porta a Laterino, and that various visions of saints and spectres had appeared to holy persons, proclaiming changes in the state, and commanding a public demonstration of repentance. Each parish organised a procession, and all in turn marched, some by day and some by night, singing Litanies, and beating and scourging themselves, to the Cathedral, where they dedicated candles; and 'one ransomed prisoners for an offering, and another dowered a girl in marriage.'

In Bologna in 1457 a similar revival took place on the occasion of an outbreak of the plague. 'Flagellants went round the city, and when they came to a cross, they all cried with a loud voice: "Misericordia! misericordia!" For eight days there was a strict fast; the butchers shut their shops.' What follows in the 'Chronicle' is comic: 'Meretrices ad concubita nullum admittebant. Ex eis quâdam quæ cupiditate lucri adolescentem admiserat, deprehensâ, aliâ meretrices ipsa illius nates nudas corrigiis percusserunt, ut sanguinem emitteret.'<sup>9</sup> Ferrara exhibited a like devotion in 1496, on even a larger scale. About this time

<sup>8</sup> See Muratori, vol. xxiii. p. 839.

<sup>9</sup> *Annales Bononiensis*. Mur. xxiii. 890

the entire Italian nation was panic-stricken by the passage of Charles VIII., and by the changes in states and kingdoms which Savonarola had predicted. The Ferrarese, to quote the language of their chronicler, expected that 'in this year, throughout Italy, would be the greatest famine, war, and want that had ever been since the world began.' Therefore they fasted, and 'the Duke of Ferrara fasted together with the whole of his court.' At the same time a proclamation was made against swearing, games of hazard, and unlawful trades: and it was enacted that the Jews should resume their obnoxious yellow gaberdine with the O upon their breasts. In 1500 these edicts were repeated. The condition of Italy had grown worse and worse: it was necessary to besiege the saints with still more energetic demonstrations. Therefore 'the Duke Ercole d'Este, for good reasons to him known, and because it is always well to be on good terms with God, ordained that processions should be made every third day in Ferrara, with the whole clergy, and about 4,000 children or more from twelve years of age upwards, dressed in white, and each holding a banner with a painted Jesus. His lordship, and his sons and brothers, followed this procession, namely the Duke on horseback because he could not then walk, and all the rest on foot, behind the Bishop.'<sup>10</sup> A certain amount of irony transpires in this quotation, which would make one fancy that the chronicler suspected the Duke of ulterior, and perhaps political motives.

It sometimes happened that the contagion of such devotion spread from city to city; on one occasion, in 1399, it travelled from Piedmont through the whole of Italy. The epidemic of flagellants of which Giovanni Villani speaks in 1310 (lib. viii. cap. 121), began also in Piedmont, and spread along the Genoese Riviera. The Florentine authorities refused entrance to these fanatics into their territory. In 1334, Villani mentions another outburst of the same devotion (lib. xi. cap. 23), which was excited by the preaching of Fra Venturino da Bergamo. The penitents on this occasion wore for a badge a dove with the olive-branch. They stayed fifteen days in Florence, scourging themselves before the altars of the Dominican churches, and feasting, five hundred at a time in the Piazza di S. M. Novella. Corio, in the 'Storia di Milano' (p. 281), gives an interesting account of these 'white penitents,' as they were called, in the year 1399: 'Multitudes of men, women, girls, boys, small and great, townspeople and countryfolk, nobles and burghers, laity and clergy, with bare feet and dressed in white sheets from head to foot,' visited the towns and villages of every district in succession. 'On their journey, when they came to a cross-road or to crosses, they threw themselves on the ground, crying "Misericordia" three times; then they recited the Lord's Prayer and the Ave Mary. On their entrance into a city, they walked singing "Stabat Mater dolorosa" and other litanies and prayers. The population of the places to which they came were divided: for some went forth and told those who stayed that

<sup>10</sup> *Diario Ferrarese*. Mur. xxiv. pp 17-386.

they should assume the same habit, so that at one time there were as many as 10,000, and at another as many as 15,000 of them.' After admitting that the fruit of this devotion was in many cases penitence, amity, and almsgiving, Corio goes on to observe: 'However, men, returned to a worse life than ever after it was over.' It is noticeable that Italy was devastated in 1400 by a horrible plague; and it is impossible not to believe that the crowding of so many penitents together on the highways and in the cities led to this result.

During the anarchy of Italy between 1494—the date of the invasion of Charles VIII.—and 1527—the date of the sack of Rome—the voice of preaching friars and hermits was often raised, and the effect was to drive the people to a frenzy of revivalistic piety. Milan was the centre of the military operations of the French, the Swiss, the Spaniards, and the Germans. No city suffered more cruelly, and in none were fanatical prophets received with greater superstition. In 1516 there appeared in Milan 'a layman, large of stature, gaunt, and beyond measure wild, without shoes, without shirt, bareheaded, with bristly hair and beard, and so thin that he seemed another Julian the hermit.' He lived on water and millet-seed, slept on the bare earth, refused alms of all sorts, and preached with wonderful authority. In spite of the opposition of the Archbishop and Chapter, he chose the Duomo for his theatre; and there he denounced the vices of the priests and monks to vast congregations of eager listeners. In a word, he engaged in open warfare with the clergy on their own ground. But they of course proved too strong for him, and he was driven out of the city. He was a native of Siena, aged thirty.<sup>11</sup> We may compare with this picturesque apparition of Jeronimo in Milan what Varchi says about the prophets who haunted Rome like birds of evil omen in the first years of the pontificate of Clement VII. 'Not only friars from the pulpit, but hermits on the piazza, went about preaching and predicting the ruin of Italy and the end of the world with wild cries and threats.'<sup>12</sup> In 1523 Milan beheld the spectacle of a parody of the old preachers. There appeared a certain Frate di S. Marco, whom the people held for a saint, and who 'encouraged the Milanese against the French, saying it was a merit with Jesus Christ to slay those Frenchmen, and that they were pigs.' He seems to have been a feeble and ignorant fellow, whose head had been turned by the examples of Bussolaro and Savonarola.<sup>13</sup> Again, in 1529, we find a certain monk, Tommaso, of the order of S. Dominic, stirring up a great commotion of piety in Milan. The city had been brought to the very lowest state of misery by the Spanish occupation; and, strange to say, this friar was himself a Spaniard. In order to propitiate offended deities, he organised a procession on a great scale. 700 women, 500

<sup>11</sup> See Prato and Burigazzo, *Arch. Stor.* vol. iii. pp. 357, 431. It is here worth noticing that Siena, the city of civil discord, was also the city of frenetic piety. The names of S. Caterina, S. Bernadino, and Bernado Tolomei occur to the mind.

<sup>12</sup> *Storia Fiorentina*, vol. i. p. 87.

<sup>13</sup> *Arch. Stor.* vol. iii. p. 443.

men, and 2,500 children assembled in the Cathedral. The children were dressed in white, the men and women in sackcloth, and all were barefooted. They promenaded the streets of Milan, incessantly shouting 'Misericordia!' and besieged the Duomo with the same dismal cry, the Bishop and the Municipal authorities of Milan taking part in the devotion.<sup>14</sup> These gusts of penitential piety were matters of real national importance. Writers imbued with the classic spirit of the Renaissance thought them worthy of a place in their philosophical histories. Thus we find Pitti, in the '*Storia Fiorentina*' ('*Arch. Stor.*' vol. i. p. 112), describing what happened at Florence in 1514: 'There appeared in Santa Croce a Frate Francesco da Montepulciano, very young, who rebuked vice with severity, and affirmed that God had willed to scourge Italy, especially Florence and Rome, in sermons so terrible that the audience kept crying with floods of tears, "Misericordia!" The whole people was struck dumb with horror, for those who could not hear the friar by reason of the crowd, listened with no less fear to the reports of others. At last he preached a sermon so awful that the congregation stood like men who had lost their senses; for he promised to reveal upon the third day how and from what source he had received this prophecy. However, when he left the pulpit, worn out and exhausted, he was seized with an illness of the lungs, which soon put an end to his life.' Pitti goes on to relate the frenzy of revivalism excited by this monk's preaching, which had roused all the old memories of Savonarola in Florence. It became necessary for the Bishop to put down the devotion by special edicts, while the Medici endeavoured to distract the minds of the people by tournaments and public shows.

Enough has now been quoted from various original sources to illustrate the feverish recurrences of superstitious panics in Italy during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. It will be observed from what has been said about John of Vicenza, Jacopo del Bussolaro, S. Bernardino, Roberto da Lecce, Giovanni della Marca, and Fra Capistrano, that Savonarola was by no means an extraordinary phenomenon in Italian history. Combining the methods and the aims of all these men, and remaining within the sphere of their conceptions, he impressed a rôle, which had been often played in the chief Italian towns, with the stamp of his peculiar genius. It was a source of weakness to him in his combat with Alexander VI. that he could not rise above the monastic ideal of the prophet which prevailed in Italy, or grasp one of those regenerative conceptions which formed the motive force of the Reformation. The inherent defects of all Italian revivals, spasmodic in their paroxysms, vehement while they lasted, but transient in their effects, are exhibited upon a tragic scale by Savonarola. What strikes us, after studying the records of these movements in Italy, is chiefly the want of true mental energy. The momentary effect produced in great cities like Florence, Milan, Verona, Pavia, Bologna, and Perugia is quite out of proportion

<sup>14</sup> Burigozzo, pp. 485-89.

to the slight intellectual power exerted by the prophet in each case. He has nothing really new or life-giving to communicate. He preaches indeed the duty of repentance and charity, institutes a reform of glaring moral abuses, and works as forcibly as he can upon the imagination of his audience. But he sets no current of fresh thought in motion. Therefore, when his personal influence was once forgotten, he left no mark upon the nation he so deeply agitated. We can only wonder that, in many cases, he obtained so complete an ascendancy in the political world. All this is as true of Savonarola as it is of S. Bernardino. It is this which removes him so immeasurably from Huss, from Wesley, and from Luther.



## APPENDIX V

*The 'Sommario della Storia d' Italia dal 1511 al 1527,' by  
Francesco Vettori<sup>1</sup>*

I HAVE reserved for special notice in this Appendix the short history written of the period between 1511 and 1527 by Francesco Vettori; not because I might not have made use of it in several of the previous chapters, but because it seemed to me that it was better to concentrate in one place the illustrations of Machiavelli and Guicciardini which it supplies. Francesco Vettori was born at Florence in 1474 of a family which had distinguished itself by giving many able public servants to the Commonwealth. He adopted the politics of the Medicean party, remaining loyal to his aristocratic creed all through the troublous times which followed the French invasion of 1494, the sack of Prato in 1512, the sack of Rome in 1527, and the murder of Duke Alessandro in 1536. Even when he seemed to favour a republican policy, he continued in secret stanch to the family by whom he hoped to obtain honours and privileges in the state. Like all the Ottimati, so furiously abused by Pitti, Francesco Vettori found himself at last deceived in his expectations. To the Medici they sold the freedom of their native city, and in return for this unpatriotic loyalty they were condemned to exile, death, imprisonment, or frosty toleration by the prudent Cosimo. Two years after Cosimo had been made Duke, Vettori died, aged upwards of sixty, without having shared in the prosperity of the princes to whose service he had consecrated his life and for whose sake he had helped to enslave Florence. To respect this species of fidelity, or to feel any pity for the men who were so cruelly disappointed of their selfish expectations, is impossible.

Francesco Vettori held offices of importance on various occasions in the Commonwealth of Florence. In 1520, for example, he entered the Signory; and in 1521 he was Gonfalonier of Justice. Many years of his life were spent on foreign missions, as ambassador to the Emperor Maximilian, resident ambassador at the Courts of Julius and Leo, ambassador together with Filippo Strozzi to the Court of Francis I., and orator at Rome on the election of Clement. He had therefore, like Machiavelli and Guicciardini, the best opportunities of forming a correct judgment of the men whose characters he weighed in his 'Sommaria,' and of obtaining a faithful account of the events which he related. He deserves a place upon the muster-roll of literary statesmen mentioned by me in Chapter v.; nor should I have omitted him from

<sup>1</sup> Printed in *Arch. Stor. It.* Appendice No. 22, vol. vi.

the company of Segni and Varchi, had not his history been exclusively devoted to an earlier period than theirs. At the same time he was an intimate friend both of Guicciardini and Machiavelli. Some of the most precious compositions of the latter are letters addressed from Florence or San Casciano to Francesco Vettori, at the time when the ex-war-secretary was attempting to gain the favour of the Medici. The clairvoyance and acuteness, the cynical philosophy of life, the definite judgment of men, the clear comprehension of events, which we trace in Machiavelli, are to be found in Vettori. Vettori, however, had none of Machiavelli's genius. What he writes is, therefore, valuable as proving that the Machiavellian philosophy was not peculiar to that great man, but was shared by many inferior thinkers. Florentine culture at the end of the fifteenth century culminated in these statistes of hard brain and stony hearts, who only saw the bad in human nature, but were not led by cynicism or scepticism to lose their interest in the game of politics.

In the dedication of the 'Sommario della Storia d' Italia' to Francesco Scarfi, Vettori says that he composed it at his villa, whither he retired in 1527. I do not purpose to extract portions of the historical narrative contained in this sketch; to do so indeed would be to transcribe the whole, so closely and succinctly is it written; but rather to quote the passages which throw a light upon the opinions of Machiavelli and Guicciardini, or confirm the views of men and morals adopted in my previous chapters.

After touching on the sack of Prato and the consternation which ensued in Florence, Vettori describes the return of the Medici in 1512. Giuliano, the son of Lorenzo, was the first to appear: after him came the Cardinal Giovanni, and Giulano's son Giulio.<sup>2</sup> The elder among their partisans persuaded them to call a Parlamento and assume the government in earnest. On September 16, accordingly, the Cardinal took possession of the palace—*fece pigliare il Palazzo*; the Signory summoned the people into the piazza—a mere matter of form; a Balia of forty men was appointed; the Gonfalonier Ridolfi resigned; and the city was reduced to the will and pleasure of the Cardinal de' Medici. Then reasons Vettori:<sup>3</sup> 'This was what is called an absolute tyranny; yet, speaking of the things of this world without prejudice and according to the truth, I say that if it were possible to institute republics like that imagined by Plato, or feigned to exist in Utopia by Thomas More, we might affirm they were not tyrannical governments: but all the commonwealths or kingdoms I have seen or read of, have, it seems to me, a savour of tyranny. Nor is it a matter for astonishment that parties and factions have often prevailed in Florence, and that one man has arisen to make himself the chief, when we reflect that the city is very populous, that many of the burghers desire to share in its advantages, and that

<sup>2</sup> Giovanni and Giulio were afterwards Leo X. and Clement VII.

<sup>3</sup> P. 293.

there are few prizes to distribute: wherefore one party always must have the upper hand and enjoy the honours and benefits of the state, while the other stands by to watch the game.' He then proceeds to criticise France, where the nobles alone bear arms and pay no taxes, and where the administration of justice is slow and expensive; and Venice, where three thousand gentlemen keep more than 100,000 of the inhabitants below their feet, unhonoured, powerless, unprivileged, oppressed. Having demonstrated the elements of tyranny and injustice both in a kingdom and a commonwealth reputed prosperous and free, he shows that, according to his own philosophy, no blame attaches to a burgher who succeeds in usurping the sole mastery of a free state, provided he rule wisely; for all kingdoms were originally founded either by force or by craft. 'We ought not therefore to call that private citizen a tyrant who has usurped the government of his state, if he be a good man: nor again to call a man the real lord of a city who, though he has the investiture of the Emperor, is bad and malevolent.' This critique of constitutions from the pen of a doctrinaire, who was also a man of experience, is interesting, partly for its positive frankness, and partly as showing what elementary notions still prevailed about the purposes of government. Vettori's ultimate criterion is the personal quality of the ambitious ruler.

Passing to what he says about Leo X.,<sup>4</sup> it is worth while to note that he attributes his election chiefly to the impression produced upon the Cardinals by Alexander and Julius. 'During the reign of two fierce and powerful Pontiffs, Cardinals had been put to death, imprisoned, deprived of their property, exiled, and kept in continual alarm; and so great was the dread among them now of electing another such Pope, that they unanimously chose Giovanni de' Medici. Up to that time he had always shown himself liberal and easy, or, rather, prodigal in squandering the little that he owned; he had moreover managed so to dissemble as to acquire a reputation for most excellent habits of life.' Vettori adds that his power in Florence helped him, and that he owed much to the ability displayed by Bernardo da Bibbiena in winning votes. The joy of the Florentines at his election is attributed to mean motives: 'being all of them given over to commerce and gain, they thought they ought to get some profit from this Papacy.'<sup>5</sup>

The government which Lorenzo, afterwards Duke of Urbino, now established in Florence is very favourably described by Vettori.<sup>6</sup> 'Lorenzo, though still a young man, applied himself with great attention to the business of the city, providing that equal justice should be administered to all, that the public moneys should be levied and spent with frugality, and that disputes should be settled to the satisfaction of all parties. His rule was tolerated, because, while the revenues were large and the expenses small, the citizens were not troubled with taxes; and this is the

<sup>4</sup> P. 297.

<sup>5</sup> P. 300.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

chief way to please a people, seeing their affection for a prince is measured by the good they get from him.' Taking this opinion of Lorenzo, it is possible for Vettori in another place to say of him that 'he governed Florence like a citizen;<sup>7</sup>' and on the occasion of his death in 1520, he passes what amounts to a panegyric on his character. 'His death was a misfortune for Florence, which it would be difficult to describe. Though young he had the qualities of virtuous maturity. He bore a real affection toward the citizens, was parsimonious of the moneys of the Commune, prodigal of his own; while a foe to vice, he was not too severe on those who erred. Though he began his military life at twenty-three, he always bore the cuirass of a man-at-arms upon his shoulders day and night on active service. He slept very little, was sober in his diet, temperate in love. The Florentines did not love him, because it is not possible for men used to freedom to love a ruler; but he, for his part, had not sought the office which was thrust upon him by the will of others. Madonna Alfonsina, his mother, brought unpopularity upon him; for she was avaricious, and the Florentines, who notice every detail, thought her grasping: and though he wanted to restrain her, he found himself unable to do so through the high esteem in which he held her. Maddalena, his wife, died six days before him, after giving birth to a daughter Catherine.' This is the, no doubt, highly favourable portrait of the man to whom Machiavelli dedicated his 'Principe.' The somewhat negative good qualities of Lorenzo, his prudence and parsimony, his freedom from despotic ambition, and dislike of dangerous service, combined with his deference to the powerful members of his own family, are very unlike Machiavelli's ideal of the founder of a state. Cesare Borgia was almost the exact opposite. The impression produced by Vettori's panegyric is further confirmed by what he says about Lorenzo's disinclination to undertake the Duchy of Urbino.<sup>8</sup>

But to return to the early days of Leo's pontificate. Vettori marks his interference in the affairs of Lucca as the first great mistake he made.<sup>9</sup> His advisers in Florence had not reflected 'what infamy it would bring upon the Pope in the opinion of all men, or what suspicion it would rouse among the princes, if in the first months of his power he were led to sanction an attack by the Florentines upon the Lucchese, their neighbours and allies. How too could the burghers of Florence, who had urged him to this step, remind the pontiff that he ought to moderate his desire of gaining dominion for the Church, and for his kin, by the example of former Popes, all of whom, in the interest of their dependants, had acquired to their own dishonour with peril and expense what in a few days upon their death returned to the old and rightful owners?' The conduct of Leo with regard to Lucca, his policy in Florence, and the splendour maintained by his brother at Rome, did in fact rouse the

<sup>7</sup> P. 306.

<sup>8</sup> P. 321. See too p. 307.

<sup>9</sup> P. 301.

jealousy of the Italian powers both great and small.<sup>10</sup> 'King Ferdinand remarked; if Giuliano has left Florence, he must be aiming at something better, which can be nothing but the realm of Naples. The Dukes of Milan, Ferrara, and Urbino said the same. The Sienese thought; if the Pope allows the Florentines to attack Lucca, which is so strong, well furnished, and harmonious, far more will he consent to their encroaching upon us, who are weak, ill-provided, and at odds among ourselves. The Duke of Ferrara had further reasons for discontent in respect to Modena and Reggio.' Altogether, Leo began to lose credit. Secret alliances were formed against him by the della Rovere, the Baglioni, and the Petrucci; and though he took care to attend public services and to fast more than etiquette required, nobody believed in him. Vettori's comment reads like an echo of Machiavelli and Guicciardini.<sup>11</sup> 'Assuredly it is most difficult to combine temporal lordship with a reputation for religion: for they are two things which will not harmonise. He who well considers the law of the Gospel will observe that the pontiffs, though called Christ's vicars, have originated a new religion unlike that of Christ except in name. His enjoins poverty; they desire riches. He preached humility; they follow after pride. He commanded obedience; they aim at universal sovereignty. I could enlarge upon their other vices; but it is enough to allude to these, without entering into inconvenient discourses.' While treating of the affairs of Urbino,<sup>12</sup> however, Vettori remarks that Leo could not have done otherwise than punish Francesco Maria della Rovere, if he wished to maintain the Papacy at the height of reputation to which it had been raised by his predecessors.

In his general estimate of Leo, Vettori confirms all that we know about this Pope from other sources. He insists more perhaps than other historians upon the able diplomacy by which Lodovico Canossa, Bishop of Tricarico, made terms with Francis after Marignano,<sup>13</sup> and traces Leo's fatal alliance with Charles V. in 1520 to the influence of Jeronimo Adorno.<sup>14</sup> The secret springs of Leo's conduct, when he was vainly endeavouring to steer his own profit between the great rivals for power in Europe, are exposed with admirable precision at both of these points. Of the prodigality which helped to ruin this Pope, and which made his two successors impotent, he speaks with sneering sarcasm. 'It was as easy for him to keep 1,000 ducats together as for a stone to fly into the air by its own weight.'<sup>15</sup> When the news of the capture of Milan reached him on November 27, 1520, Leo was at the Villa Magliana in the neighbourhood of Rome.<sup>16</sup> Whether he took cold at a window, or whether his anxiety and jealousy disturbed his constitution, Vettori re-

<sup>10</sup> P. 303.

<sup>11</sup> P. 304.

<sup>12</sup> P. 319.

<sup>13</sup> P. 313.

<sup>14</sup> P. 334.

<sup>15</sup> P. 322.

<sup>16</sup> P. 338.

mains uncertain. At any rate, he was attacked with fever, returned to Rome, and died. 'It was said that his death was caused by poison; but these stories are always circulated about men of high estate, especially when they succumb to acute disease. Those, however, who knew the constitution and physical conformation of Leo, and his habits of life, will rather wonder that he lived so long.' After summing up the vicissitudes of his career and passing a critique upon his vacillating policy, Vettori resumes:<sup>17</sup> 'while on the one hand he would fain have never had one care to trouble him; on the other he was desirous of fame and sought to aggrandise his kindred. Fortune, to rid him of this ambition, removed his brother and his nephew in his lifetime. Lastly, when he had engaged in a war against the King of France, in which, if he won, he lost, and was going to meet obvious ruin, fortune removed him from the world so that he might not see his own mischance. In his pontificate at Rome there was no plague, no poverty, no war. Letters and the arts flourished, and the vices were also at their height. Alexander and Julius had been wont to seize the inheritance not only of the prelates but of every little priest or clerk who died in Rome. Leo abstained entirely from such practices. Therefore people came in crowds; and it may be said for certain that in the eight years of his papacy, the population of Rome increased by one third.' Vettori prudently refuses to sum up the good and bad of Leo's character in one decisive sentence. He notes, however, that he was blamed for not keeping to his word: 'it was a favourite expression with him, that princes ought to give such answers as would send petitioners away satisfied; accordingly he made so many promises, and fed people with such great expectations, that it became impossible to please them.'

The election of Adrian is attributed by Vettori to the mutual hatred and jealousy of the Cardinals.<sup>18</sup> He ascribes the loss of Rhodes to the Pope's want of interest in great affairs, adds his testimony to his private excellence and public incapacity, and dismisses him without further notice.<sup>19</sup>

What he tells us about Clement is more interesting. In the dedication to the 'Sommario' he apologised in express terms for the high opinion recorded of this Pope. Yet the impression which he leaves upon our mind by what he writes is so unfavourable as to make it clear what Clement's foes habitually said against him. He remarks, as one excuse for his ill-success in office, that he succeeded to a Papacy ruined by the prodigality in war and peace of Leo.<sup>20</sup> As knight of Rhodes, as governor of Florence, and as Cardinal, Clement had shown himself an able man. Fortune heaped her favours on him then. As soon as he was made Pope, she veered round, 'From a puissant and respected Cardinal, he became a feeble and discredited Pope.' His first care was to provide

<sup>17</sup> P. 339.

<sup>18</sup> P. 341.

<sup>19</sup> Pp. 343, 347.

<sup>20</sup> P. 348.

for the government of Florence. In order to arrive at a decision, he asked counsel of the Florentine orators and four other noble burghers then in Rome, as to whether he could advantageously entrust the city to the Cardinal of Cortona in guardianship over Ippolito and Alessandro, the young bastards of the Medici.<sup>21</sup> 'All men nearly,' says Vettori, 'are flatterers, and say what they believe will please great folk, although they think the contrary. Of the thirteen whom the Pope consulted, ten advised him to send Ippolito to Florence under the guardianship of the Cardinal of Cortona.' The remaining three, who were Ruberto Acciajuoli, Lorenzo Strozzi, and Francesco Vettori, pointed out the impropriety of administering a free city through a priest who held his title from a subject town. They recommended the appointment of a Gonfalonier for one year, and so on, till a member of the Medicean family could take the lead. Clement, however, decided on the other course; and to this cause may be traced half the troubles of his reign.

The greater part of what remains of the 'Sommario' is occupied with the wars and intrigues of Francis, Charles, and Clement. Vettori, it may be said in passing, records a very unfavourable opinion of the Marquis of Pescara, who was, he hints, guilty of first turning a favourable ear to Moroni's plot and then of discovering the whole to his master.<sup>22</sup> A few days after his breach of faith with the Milanese, he fell ill and died. 'He was a man whose military excellence cannot be denied; but proud beyond all measure, envious, ungrateful, avaricious, venomous, cruel, without religion or humanity, he was born to be the ruin of Italy; and it may be truly said that of the evil she has suffered and still suffers a large part was caused by him.'

Of the breach of faith of Francis, after he had left his Spanish prison, Vettori speaks in terms of the very highest commendation.<sup>23</sup> His refusal to cede Burgundy to Charles was just and patriotic. That he broke his faith was no crime; for, though a man ought rather to die than forswear himself, yet his first duty is to God, his second to his country. Francis was clearly acting for the benefit of his kingdom; and had he not left his two sons as hostages in Spain? The whole defence is a good piece of special pleading, and might be used to illustrate the chapter on the Faith of Princes in the 'Principe.'

By far the most striking passage in Vettori's 'Sommario' is the description of the march of Frundsberg's and De Bourbon's army upon Rome.<sup>24</sup> He makes it clear to what extent the calamity of the sack was due to the selfishness and cowardice of the Italian princes. First of all the Venetians refused to offer any obstacles before the passage of the Po, feeling that by doing so they might draw trouble on their own provinces. Then the Duke of Ferrara supplied the Lutherans with artillery, of which they hitherto had stood in need. The first use they made of their

<sup>21</sup> P. 349. They were 14 and 13 years of age respectively.

<sup>22</sup> Pp. 358, 359.

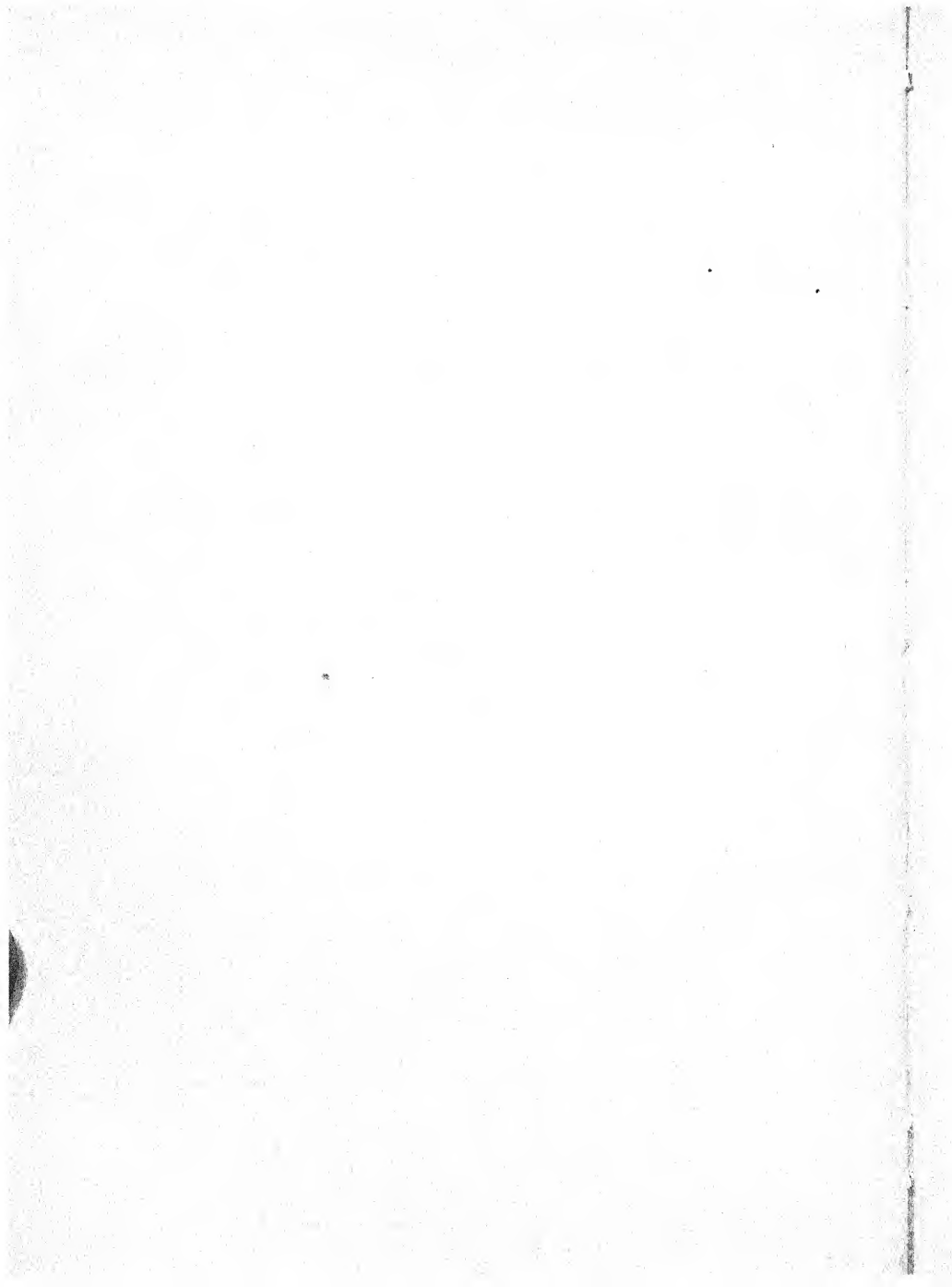
<sup>23</sup> P. 362.

<sup>24</sup> Pp. 372-82.



fire-arms was to shoot the best captain in Italy, Giovanni de' Medici of the Black Bands. The Duke of Urbino, the Marquis of Saluzzo, and Guido Rangoni watched them cross the river and proceed by easy stages through the district of Piacenza, 'following them like lacqueys waiting on their lords.' The same thing happened at Parma and Modena, while the Duke of Ferrara kept supplying the foreigners with food and money. Clement meanwhile was penniless in Rome. Rich as the city was, he had so utterly lost credit that he dared not ask for loans, and was so feeble that he could not rob. The Colonnese, moreover, who had recently plundered the Vatican, kept him in a state of terror. As the invaders, now commanded by the Constable de Bourbon, approached Tuscany, the youth of Florence demanded to be armed in defence of their hearths and homes. The Cardinal of Cortona, fearing a popular rising, refused to grant their request. A riot broke out, and the Medici were threatened with expulsion: but by the aid of influential citizens a revolution was averted. The Constable, avoiding Florence and Siena, marched straight on Rome, still watched but unmolested by the armies of the League. He left his artillery on the road, and as is well known, carried the walls of Rome by assault on the morning of May 3, dying himself at the moment of victory. From what has just been rapidly narrated, it will be seen how utterly abject was the whole of Italy at this moment, when a band of ruffians, headed by a rebel from his sovereign, in disobedience to the viceroy of the king he pretended to serve, was not only allowed but actually helped to traverse rivers, plains, and mountains, on their way to Rome. What happened after the capture of the Transteverine part of the city moves even deeper scorn. 'It still remained for the Imperial troops to enter the populous and wealthy quarters; and these they had to reach by one of three bridges. They numbered hardly more than 25,000 men, all told. In Rome were at least 30,000 men fit to bear arms between the ages of sixteen and fifty, and among them were many trained soldiers, besides crowds of Romans, swaggering braggarts, used to daily quarrels, with beards upon their breasts. Nevertheless it was found impossible to get 500 together in one band for the defence of one of the three bridges.' What immediately follows gives so striking a picture of the sack, that a translation of it will form a fit conclusion to this volume. 'The soldiers slew at pleasure; pillaged the houses of the middle classes and small folk; the palaces of the nobles, the convents of both sexes, and the churches. They made prisoners of men, women, and even of little children, without regard to age, or vows, or any other claim on pity. The slaughter was not great, for men rarely kill those who offer no resistance; but the booty was incalculable, in coin, jewels, gold and silver plate, clothes, tapestries, furniture, and goods of all descriptions. To this should be added the ransoms, which amounted to a sum that, if set down, would win no credence. Let any one consider through how many years the money of all Christendom had been flowing into Rome, and staying there in a great measure; let him remember the Cardinals, Bishops, Prelates, and public

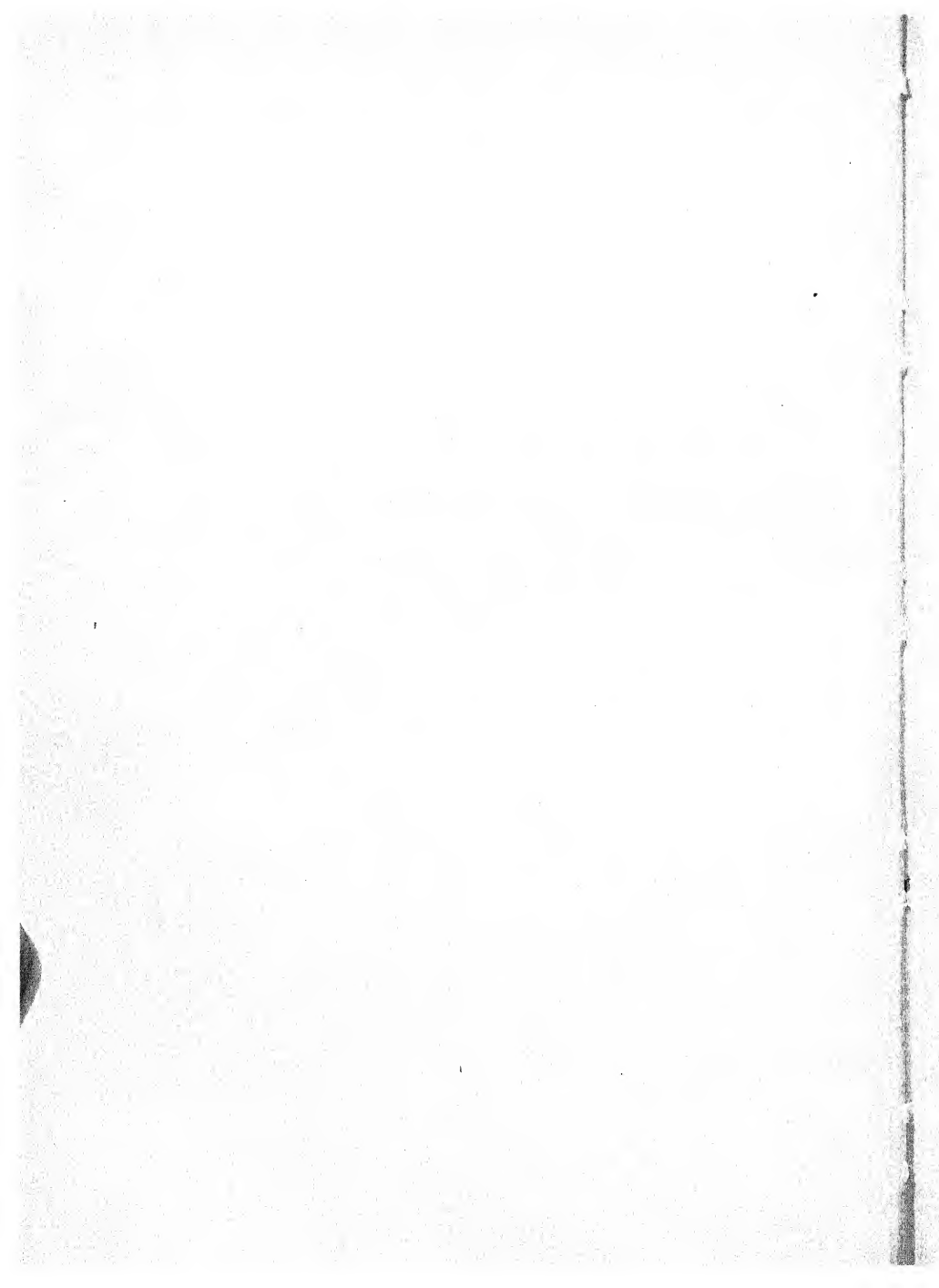
officers, the wealthy merchants, both Roman and foreign, selling at high prices, letting their houses at dear rents, and paying nothing in the way of taxes; let him call to mind the artisans, the poorer folk, the prostitutes; and he will judge that never was a city sacked of which the memory remains, whence greater store of treasure could be drawn. Though Rome has at other times been taken and pillaged, yet never before was it the Rome of our days. Moreover, the sack lasted so long that what might not perhaps have been discovered on the first day, sooner or later came to light. This disaster was an example to the world that men, proud, avaricious, envious, murderous, lustful, hypocritical, cannot long preserve their state. Nor can it be denied that the inhabitants of Rome, especially the Romans, were stained with all these vices and with many greater.'



## THE REVIVAL OF LEARNING

At tibi fortassis, si, quod mens sperat et optat,  
Es post me victura diu, meliora supersunt  
Secula; non omnes veniet lethæus in annos  
Iste sopor; poterunt, discussis forte tenebris,  
Ad purum priscumque jubar remeare nepotes.  
Tunc Heliconā novā revirentem stirpe videbis,  
Tunc lauros frondere sacras; tunc alta resurgent  
Ingenia atque animi dociles, quibus ardor honesti  
Pieridum studii veterem geminabit amorem

PETRARCHÆ *Africa*, lib. ix.



## PREFACE<sup>1</sup>

THIS VOLUME on the 'Revival of Learning' follows that on the 'Age of the Despots,' published in 1875, and precedes that on the 'Fine Arts,' which is now also offered to the public. In dealing with the 'Revival of Learning' and the 'Fine Arts,' I have tried to remember that I had not so much to write again the history of these subjects, as to treat their relation to the 'Renaissance in Italy.' In other words, I have regarded each section of my theme as subordinate to the general culture of a great historical period. The volume on 'Italian Literature,' still in contemplation, is intended to complete the work.

While handling the theme of the Italian Renaissance, I have selected such points, and emphasised such details, as I felt to be important for the biography of a nation at the most brilliant epoch of its intellectual activity. The historian of culture sacrifices much that the historian of politics will judge essential, and calls attention to matters that the general reader may sometimes find superfluous. He must submit to bear the reproach of having done at once too little and too much. He must be content to traverse at one time well-worn ground, and at another to engage in dry or abstruse inquiries. He must not shrink from seeming to affect the fame of a compiler; nor, unless his powers be of the highest, can he hope altogether to avoid repetitions wearisome alike to reader and to writer. His main object is to paint the portrait of national genius identical through all varieties of manifestation; and in proportion as he has preserved this point of view with firmness, he may hope to have succeeded.

For the History of the Revival of Learning I have had continual recourse to Tiraboschi's '*Storia della Letteratura Italiana*.' That work is still the basis of all researches bearing on the subject. I owe besides particular obligations to Vespasiano's '*Vite di Uomini Illustri*,' to Comparetti's '*Virgilio nel Medio Evo*,' to Rosmini's '*Vita di Filelfo*,' '*Vita di Vittorino de Feltre*,' and '*Vita di Guarino da Verona*,' to Shepherd's '*Life of Poggio Bracciolini*,' to Dennistoun's '*Dukes of Urbino*,' to Schultze's '*Gemistos Plethon*,' to Didot's '*Alde Manuce*,' to Von Reumont's '*Lorenzo de' Medici*,' to Burckhardt's '*Cultur der Renaissance in Italien*,' to Voigt's '*Wiederbelebung des classischen Altherthums*,' and to Gregorovius's '*Geschichte der Stadt Rom*.' To Voigt and Burckhardt, having perforce traversed the same ground that they have done, I feel that I have been in a special sense indebted. At the same time I have made it my invariable practice, as the notes to this volume will show, to found

<sup>1</sup> To the original edition of this volume.

my own opinions on the study of original sources. To mention in detail all the editions of the works of humanists and scholars I have consulted, would be superfluous.

To me it has been a labour of love to record even the bare names of those Italian worthies who recovered for us in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries 'the everlasting consolations' of the Greek and Latin classics. The thought that I was tracing the history of an achievement fruitful of the weightiest results for modern civilisation has sustained me in a task that has been sometimes tedious. The collective greatness of the Revival has reconciled my mind to many trivialities of detail. The prosaic minutiae of obscure biographies and long-forgotten literary labours have been glorified by what appears to me the poetry and the romance of the whole theme. It lies not in my province or my power to offer my readers any adequate apology for such defects as my own want of skill in exposition, or the difficulty of transfiguring with vital light and heat a subject so remote from present interests, may have occasioned. I must leave this volume in their hands, hoping that some at least may be animated by the same feeling of gratitude toward those past workers in the field of learning which has supported me.

CLIFTON: *March 1877.*



## CHAPTER I

### THE MEN OF THE RENAISSANCE

*Formation of Conscious Personality in Italy—Aristocracy of Intellect—Self-Culture as an Aim—Want of National Architecture—Want of National Drama—Eminence of Sculpture and Painting—Peculiar Capacity for Literature—Scholarship—Men of Many-sided Genius—Their Relation to the Age—Conflict between Mediæval Tradition and Humanism—Petrarch—The Meaning of the Revival begun by him—Cosmopolitan Philosophy—Toleration—An Intellectual Empire—Worldliness—Confusion of Impulses and Inspirations—Copernicus and Columbus—Christianity and the Classics—Italian Incapacity for Religious Reformation—Free Thought takes the form of License—Harmonies attempted between Christianity and Antique Philosophy—Florentine Academy—Physical Qualities of the Italians—Portraits of Two Periods—Physical Exercises—Determination of the Race to Scholarship—Ancient Memories of Rome—The Cult of Antiquity—Desire of Fame—Fame to be found in Literature—The Cult of Intellect—The Cult of Character—Preoccupation with Personal Details—Biography—Ideal Sketches—Posthumous Glory—Enthusiasm for Erudition—Piero de' Pazzi—Florence and Athens—Paganism—Real Value of Italian Humanism—Pico on the Dignity of Man.*

THE conditions, political, social, moral, and religious, described in the first volume of this work, produced among the Italians a type of character nowhere else observable in Europe. This character, highly self-conscious and mentally mature, was needed for the intellectual movements of the Renaissance. Italy had proved herself incapable of forming an united nation, or of securing the principle of federal coherence; of maintaining a powerful military system, or of holding her own against the French and Spaniards. For these defects her Communes and her Despots, the Papacy and the kingdom of Naples, the theories of the mediæval doctrinaires and the enthusiasm of the humanists, were alike responsible; though the larger share belongs to Rome, resolutely hostile to the monarchical principle, and zealous, by espousing the Guelf faction, to maintain the discord of the nation. At the same time the very causes of political disunion were favourable to the intellectual growth of the Italians. Each State, whether republican or despotic, had, during the last years of the Middle Ages, formed a mixed society of nobles, merchants, and artisans, enclosed within the circuit of the city walls, and strongly marked by the peculiar complexion of their native place. Every town was a centre of activity and industry, eagerly competing with its neighbours, proud of its local characteristics, anxious to confer distinction on citizens who rose to eminence by genius or practical ability. Party strife in the republics, while it disturbed their internal repose, sharpened the intellect and strengthened the personality of the burghers.

Exile and proscription, the common climax of civic warfare, made them still more self-determined and self-reliant by driving each man back upon his own resources. The despots, again, through the illegal tenure of their authority, were forced to the utmost possible development of individual character: since all their fortunes depended on their qualities as men. The plots and counterplots of subjects eager for a change of government, and of neighbours anxious to encroach upon their territory, kept the atmosphere of their Courts in a continual state of agitation. One type of ability was fostered by the diplomatic relations of the several cities, yielding employment to a multitude of secretaries and ambassadors; another by the system of Condottiere warfare, offering a brilliant career to ambitious adventurers. In all departments open to a man of talent birth was of less importance than natural gifts; for the social barriers and grades of feudalism had either never existed in Italy, or had been shaken and confounded during the struggles of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The ranks of the tyrants were filled with sons of Popes and captains risen from the proletariat. The ruling class in the republics consisted of men self-made by commerce; and here the name at least of *Popolo* was sovereign. It followed that men were universally rated at what they proved themselves to be; and thus an aristocracy of genius and character grew up in Italy at a period when the rest of Europe presented but rare specimens of individuals emergent from the common herd. As in ancient Greece, the nation was of less importance than the city, and within the city personal ability carried overwhelming weight. The Italian history of the Renaissance resumes itself in the biography of men greater than their race, of mental despots, who absorbed its forces in themselves.

The intellectual and moral milieu created by multitudes of self-centred, cultivated personalities was necessary for the evolution of that spirit of intelligence, subtle, penetrative, and elastic, that formed the motive force of the Renaissance. The work achieved by Italy for the world in that age was less the work of a nation than that of men of power, less the collective and spontaneous triumph of a puissant people than the aggregate of individual efforts animated by one soul of free activity, a common striving after fame. This is noticeable at the very outset. The Italians had no national Epic: their *Divine Comedy* is the poem of the individual man. Petrarch erects self-culture to the rank of an ideal, and proposes to move the world from the standpoint of his study, darting his spirit's light through all the void circumference, and making thought a power.

The success and the failure of the Italians are alike referable to their political subdivisions, and to this strong development of their personality. We have already seen how they fell short of national unity and of military greatness. Even in the realm of art and literature the same conditions were potent. Some of the chief productions of humanity seem to require the co-operation of whole peoples working sympathetically to a common end. Foremost among these are architecture and the

drama. The most splendid triumphs of modern architecture in the French and English Gothic were achieved by the half-unconscious striving of the national genius through several centuries. The names of the builders of the cathedrals are unknown: the cathedrals themselves bear less the stamp of individual thought than of popular instinct; their fame belongs to the race that made them, to the spirit of the times that gave them birth. It is not in architecture, therefore, that we expect the Italians, divided into small and rival States, and distinguished by salient subjectivity, to show their strength. Men like Niccola Pisano, Arnolfo del Cambio, Alberti, Brunnelleschi, and Bramante were gifted with an individuality too paramount for the creation of more than mighty experiments in architecture. They bowed to no tradition, but followed the dictates of their own inventive impulse, selecting the types that suited them, and dealing freely with the forms they found around them. Instead of seeking to carry on toward its accomplishment a style, not made, but felt and comprehended by their genius, they were eager to produce new and characteristic masterpieces—signs and symbols of their own peculiar quality of mind. Italy is full of splendid but imperfect monuments of personal ability, works of beauty displaying no unbroken genealogy of unknown craftsmen, but attesting the skill of famous artists. For the practical architect her palaces and churches may, for this reason, be less instructive and less attractive than the public buildings of France. Yet for the student of national and personal characteristics, who loves to trace the physiognomy of a people in its edifices, to discover the mind of the artist in his work, their interest is unrivalled. In each city the specific *genius loci* meets us face to face: from each town-hall or cathedral the soul of a great man leans forth to greet our own. These advantages compensate for frequent extravagances, for audacities savouring of ignorance, and for awkwardness in the adoption and modification of incongruous styles. Moreover, it must always be remembered that in Italy the architect could not forget the monuments of Roman and Byzantine art around him. Classic models had to be suited to the requirements of modern life and Christian ritual; and when the Germans brought their Gothic from beyond the Alps, it suffered from its adaptation to a southern climate. The result was that Italy arrived at no great national tradition in architecture, and that free scope was offered to the whims and freaks of individual designers. When at length, at the end of the sixteenth century, the Italians attained to uniformity of taste, it was by the sacrifice of their originality. The pedantry of the classical revival did more harm to architecture than to letters, and pseudo-Roman purism superseded the genial caprices of the previous centuries.

If architecture may be said to have suffered in Italy from the supremacy of local characteristics and personal genius, overruling tradition and thwarting the evolution of a national style, the case was quite different with the other arts. Painting and sculpture demand the highest independence in the artist, and are susceptible of a far more many-sided

treatment than architecture. They cannot be the common product of a people, but require the conscious application of a special ability to the task of translating thought and feeling into form. As painters, the Italians hold the first rank among civilised nations of the modern and ancient world; and their inferiority as sculptors to the Greeks is mainly due to their mastery over painting, the essentially romantic art. The sensibilities of the new age craved a more emotional and agitated expression than is proper to sculpture. As early as the days of Ghiberti and Donatello it became clear that the Italian sculptors were following the methods of the sister art in their designs, while Michael Angelo alone had force enough to make marble the vehicle of thoughts that properly belong to painting or to music. The converse probably held good with the Greeks. What remains of their work in fresco and mosaic seems to show that they were satisfied with groups and figures modelled upon bas-reliefs and statues; just as the Florentines carved pictures, with architecture and landscape, in stone. More need not here be said upon this topic, since the achievements of the Italians in painting and in sculpture will form a main part of my history.

As regards literature, the subdivision of Italy into numerous small States and the energetic self-assertion of the individual were distinctly favourable. Though the want of a great public, such as can alone be found in the capital of a free, united nation, may be reckoned among the many reasons which prevented the Italians from developing the drama, yet the rivalry of town with town and of burgher with burgher, Court life with its varied opportunities for the display of talent, and municipal life with its restless competition in commerce and public affairs, encouraged the activity of students, historians, statisticians, critics, and poets. Culture, in the highest and widest sense of the word, was what Renaissance Italy obtained and gave to Europe; and this culture implies a full-formed personality in the men who seek it. It was the highly perfected individuality of the Italians that made them first emerge from mediæval bondage and become the apostles of humanism for the modern world. It may be regretted that their force was expended upon the diffusion of learning and the purification of style, instead of being concentrated on the creation of national masterpieces. We seek in vain for Dante's equal among the poets of the Renaissance. The 'Orlando Furioso' is but a poor second to the 'Divina Commedia;' and all those works of scholarship, which seemed to our ancestors the *ne plus ultra* of refinement, are now relegated to the lumber-room of erudition that has been superseded, or of literary ingenuity that has lost its point. Now that the boon of culture, so hardly won by the students of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, has become the common heritage of Europe, it is not always easy to explain the mental grandeur of the Italians in that age. Yet we should fail to recognise their merit, if we did not comprehend that, precisely by this absorption of their genius in the task of the Revival, they conferred the most enduring benefits upon humanity. What the modern world would have been, if the Italian nation had not

devoted its energies to the restoration of liberal learning, cannot even be imagined. The history of that devotion will form the principal subject of my present volume.

The comprehensive and many-sided natures, frequent in Renaissance Italy, were specially adapted for the dissemination of the new spirit. The appearance of such men as Leo Battista Alberti, Lionardo da Vinci, Lorenzo de' Medici, Brunnelleschi and Buonarroti, Poliziano and Pico della Mirandola, upon the stage of the Renaissance is not the least fascinating of its phenomena. We can only find their parallels by returning to the age of Pericles. But the problem for the Florentines differed from that which the Athenians had before them. In Greece, the morning-land of civilisation, men of genius, each perfect in his own capacity, were needed. Standards had to be created for the future guidance of the world in all the realms of art and thought. We are therefore less struck with the versatility than with the concentration of Pheidias, Pindar, Sophocles, Socrates. Italy, on the other hand, had for her task the reabsorption of a bygone culture. It was her vocation to resuscitate antiquity, to gather up afresh the products of the classic past, and so to blend them with the mediæval spirit as to generate what is specifically modern. It was indispensable that the men by whom this work was accomplished should be no less distinguished for largeness of intelligence, variety of acquirements, quickness of sympathy, and sensitive susceptibility, than for the complete development of some one faculty. The great characters of the Greek age were what Hegel calls plastic, penetrated through and through with a specific quality. Those of the Italian age were comprehensive and encyclopædic; the intensity of their force in any one sphere is less remarkable than its suitability to all. They were of a nature to synthesise, interpret, reproduce, and mould afresh—like Mr. Browning's Cleon, with the addition of the consciousness of young and potent energy within them. It consequently happens that, except in the sphere of the Fine Arts, we are tempted to underrate the heroes of the Renaissance. The impression they leave upon our minds at any one point is slight in comparison with the estimate we form of them when we consider each man as a whole. Nor can we point to monumental and colossal works in proof of their creative faculty.

The biographies of universal geniuses like Leo Battista Alberti or Lionardi da Vinci, so multiform in their capacity and so creative in their intuitions, prompt us to ask what is the connection between the spirit of an age and the men in whom it is incorporated. Not without reason are we forced to personify the Renaissance as something external to its greatest characters. There is an intellectual strength outside them in the century, a heritage of power prepared for them at birth. The atmosphere in which they breathe is so charged with mental vitality that the least stirring of their special energy brings them into relation with forces mightier than are the property of single natures. In feebler periods of retrospect and criticism we can but wonder at the combina-

tion of faculties so varied, and at miracles so easily accomplished. These times of clairvoyance and of intellectual magnetism, when individuals of genius appear to move like vibrios in a life-sustaining fluid specially adapted to their needs, are rare in the history of the world; nor has our science yet arrived at analysing their causes. They are not on that account the less real. To explain them by the hypothesis of a *Weltgeist*, the collective spirit of humanity proceeding in its evolution through successive phases, and making its advance from stage to stage by alternations of energy and repose, is simply to restore, in other terms, a mystery that finds its final and efficient cause in God.<sup>1</sup>

Gifted with the powerful individuality I am attempting to describe, the men of the Renaissance received their earliest education in the religion of the Middle Ages, their second in the schools of Greece and Rome. It was the many-sided struggle of personal character with time-honoured tradition on the one hand, and with new ideals on the other, that lent so much of inconsistency and contradiction to their aims. Dante remained within the pale of mediæval thoughts, and gave them full poetical expression. To him, in a truer sense than to any other poet, belongs the double glory of immortalising in verse the centuries behind him, while he inaugurated the new age. The 'Vita Nuova' and the 'Divina Commedia' are modern, in so far as the one is the first complete analysis of personal emotion, and the other is the epic of the soul conceived as concrete personality. But the form and colour, the material and structure, the warp of thought and the woof of fancy, are not modern. Petrarch opens a new era. He is not satisfied with the body of mediæval beliefs and intellectual conceptions. Antiquity presents a more fascinating ideal to his spirit, and he feels the subjectivity within him strong enough to assimilate what suits it in the present and the past. The Revival of Learning, begun by Petrarch, was no mere renewal of interest in classic literature. It was the emancipation of the reason in a race of men, intolerant of control, ready to criticise accepted canons of conduct, enthusiastic in admiration of antique liberty, freshly awakened to the sense of beauty, and anxious above all things to secure for themselves free scope in spheres outside the region of authority. Men so vigorous and independent felt the joy of exploration. There was no problem they feared to face, no formula they were not eager to recast according to their new convictions. This liberty of judgment did not of necessity lead to lawlessness; nor in any case did it produce that insurgence against Catholic orthodoxy which marked the German Reformation. Yet it lent a characteristic quality to thought and action. Men were, and dared to be, themselves for good or evil without too much regard for what their neighbours thought of them. At the same time they

<sup>1</sup> The analogy of the individual might be quoted. We are aware within ourselves of times when thought is fertile and insight clear, times of conception and projection, followed by seasons of slow digestion, assimilation, and formation, when the creative faculty stagnates, and the whole force of the intellect is absorbed in mastering through years what it took minutes to divine.

were tolerant. The culture of the Renaissance implied a philosophical acceptance of variety in fashion, faith, and conduct; and this toleration was no doubt one reason why Italian scepticism took the form of cynicism, not of religious revolution. Contact with Islam in the south and east, diplomatic relations with the Turks, familiarity with the mixed races of Spain, and commerce with the nations of the north, had widened the sympathies of the Italians, and taught them to regard humanity as one large family. The liberal spirits of the Renaissance might have quoted Marcus Aurelius with slight alteration: 'I will not say, dear City of St. Peter, but, dear City of Man!' And just as their moral and religious sensibilities were blunted, so patriotism with them ceased to be an instinct. Instead of patriotism, the Italians were inflamed with the zeal of cosmopolitan culture.

In proportion as Italy lost year by year the hope of becoming an united nation, in proportion as the military instincts died in her, and the political instincts were extinguished by despotism, in precisely the same ratio did she evermore acquire a deeper sense of her intellectual vocation. What was world-embracing in the spirit of the mediæval Church passed by transmutation into the humanism of the fifteenth century. As though aware of the hopelessness of being Italians in the same sense as the natives of Spain were Spaniards, or the natives of France were Frenchmen, the giants of the Renaissance did their utmost to efface their nationality in order that they might the more effectually restore the cosmopolitan ideal of the human family. To this end both artists and scholars, the depositaries of the real Italian greatness at this epoch, laboured; the artists by creating an ideal of beauty with a message and a meaning for all Europe, the scholars by recovering for Europe the burghership of Greek and Roman civilization. In spite of the invasions and convulsions that ruined Italy between the years 1494 and 1527, the painters and the humanists proceeded with their task, as though the fate of Italy concerned them not, as though the destinies of the modern world depended on their activity. After Venice had been desolated by the armies of the League of Cambray, Aldus Manutius presented the peace-gift of Plato to the foes of his adopted city; and when the Lutherans broke into Parmegiano's workshop at Rome, even they were awed by the tranquil majesty of the Virgin on his easel. Stories like these remind us that Renaissance Italy met her doom of servitude and degradation in the spirit of ancient Hellas, repeating as they do the tales told of Archimedes in his study, and of Paulus Æmilius face to face with the Zeus of Phidias.

As patriotism gave way to cosmopolitan enthusiasm, and toleration took the place of earnestness, in like manner the conflict of mediæval tradition with revived Paganism in the minds of these self-reliant men, trained to indulgence by their large commerce with the world, and familiarised with impiety by the ever-present pageant of an anti-Christian Church, led, as I have hinted, to recklessness and worldly vices, rather than to reformed religion. Contented with themselves and their sur-



roundings, they felt none of the unsatisfied cravings after the infinite, none of the mysterious intuitions and ascetic raptures, the self-abasements and transfigurations, stigmata and beatific visions, of the Middle Ages. The plenitude of life within them seemed to justify their instincts and their impulses, however, varied and discordant these might be. The sonorous current of the world around them drowned the voice of conscience, the suggestion of religious scruples. It is only thus we can explain to ourselves the attitude of such men as Sixtus and Alexander, serenely vicious in extreme old age. The gratification of their egotism was so complete as to exclude self-judgment by the rules and standards they professionally applied; their personality was too exacting to admit of hesitation when their instincts were concerned; in common with their age they had lost sight of all but mundane aims and interests. Three aphorisms, severally attributed to three representative Italians, may be quoted in illustration of these remarks. 'You follow infinite objects; I follow the finite;' said Cosimo de' Medici; 'you place your ladders in the heavens; I on earth, that I may not seek so high or fall so low.' 'If we are not ourselves pious,' said Julius II., 'why should we prevent other people from being so?' 'Let us enjoy the Papacy,' said Leo X., 'now that God has given it to us.'

It was only under the influence of some external terror—a plague, a desolating war, an imminent peril to the nation—that the religious sense, deadened by worldliness and selfish philosophy, made itself felt. At such seasons whole cities rushed headlong into fierce revivalism, while men of violent or profligate lives saw visions, and betook themselves to penance. Cellini's *Memoirs* are, on this point, a valuable mirror of the age in which he lived. It is clear that his ecstasies of devotion in the dungeons of S. Angelo were as sincere as the fiery impulses he obeyed with so much complacency. Passionate and worldly as men of Cellini's stamp might be, they could not shake off the associations that bound them to the past. The energy of their intense individuality took turn by turn the form and colour of ascetic piety and Pagan sensuality; and at times these strong contrasts of emotion seemed bordering upon insanity. Ungovernable natures, swayed by no fixed principle, and bent on moulding the world of thought afresh to suit their own desires, became the puppets of astrological superstition, the playthings of mad lust. Much that appears unaccountable and contradictory in the Renaissance may be referred to this imperfect blending of ecclesiastical tradition and idealised Paganism in natures potent enough to be original and wilful, but not yet tamed from semi-savagery into acquiescence by experience. Experience came to the Italians in servitude beneath the heel of Spain.

The confusion of influences, classical and mediæval, Christian and Pagan, in that age is not the least extraordinary of its phenomena. Even the new thoughts that illuminated the minds of great discoverers, seemed to them like reflections from antiquity; and while they were opening fresh worlds, their hearts were turned toward the Holy Land

of the Crusades. Columbus and Copernicus, the two men who did more than any others to revolutionise the mental attitude of humanity, appealed to their contemporaries on the strength of texts from Aristotle and Philolaus. Conscious that the guesses of the Greek cosmographers had stimulated in themselves that curiosity whereby they made the motion of the earth a certainty, and found a way across the waves to a new continent, these mighty spirits forgot how slight in reality was their debt to the inert speculators of the classic age. The truth was that in them throbbed a force of enterprise and conquering discovery, a spirit of exploration resolute and hardy, denied to the ancients.

How far this new and fruitful temper of the modern mind was due to Christianity, is a problem for the deepest speculation. The conception of a God who had made no part of His world in vain, of a Christ who had bought with His blood the whole seed of Adam, and who imposed the preaching of the faith upon His followers as a duty, wrought powerfully on Columbus. The Crusades, again, had familiarised the nations with distant objects and ideal quests; while chivalry was essentially antagonistic to positive and selfish aims. The spirit of mankind had marched a long stage during the Middle Ages. It was not possible now to conceive of God as a tranquil thinking upon thought, with Aristotle. There was no Augustus to set arbitrary limits to the empire of the world in the interest of a conquering nation, or to make the two words *orbs* and *urbs* synonymous. When Strabo hazarded the opinion that there might be populous islands in the other hemisphere, he added, with the sublime indifference of a Roman, 'But these speculations have nothing in common with practical geography; and if such islands exist, they cannot support peoples of like origin with us.' Such language was impossible for a man educated in the Christian faith, and imbued with the instincts of romanticism. Therefore, though the study of Strabo and Ptolemy at Pavia impressed Columbus with the certainty of the new route across the ocean, he owed the courage that sustained him to the conviction that God was leading him to a great end. 'When I first undertook to start for the discovery of the Indies,' he says in his will, 'I intended to beg the King and Queen to devote the whole of the money that might be drawn from these realms to Jerusalem.' The religious yearning of the mediæval pilgrim added fervour to the conviction of the student, who, by reasoning on antique texts, guessed the greatest secret of which the world has record. At the same time there was something more in Columbus than either antiquity or mediævalism could provide. The modern spirit is distinct from both; and though, in the Renaissance, creation wore the garb of imitation, and the new forces used the organs they were destined to outlive and destroy, yet we must allow to native personality the lion's share in such achievement as that of Columbus. It is the variety of spiritual elements in combination and solution, which he illustrates, that makes the psychology of the Renaissance at once so fascinating and so difficult to analyse.

While so much liberty of thought prevailed in Italy, it may be wondered why the Renaissance, eminently fertile in the domains of art and culture, bore but meagre fruit in those of religion and philosophy. The German Reformation was the Renaissance of Christianity; and in this the Italians had no share, though it should be remembered that, without their previous labours in the field of scholarship, the band who led the Reformation could hardly have given that high intellectual character to the movement which made it a new starting-point in the history of the reason. To expect from Italy the ethical regeneration of the modern world would be to misapprehend her true vocation; art and erudition were sufficient to engage her spiritual energies. The Church, again, though by no means adverse to laxity in morals, was jealous of heterodoxy. So long as freethinkers confined their audacity to such matters as form the topic of Poggio's 'Facetiæ,' Beccadelli's 'Hermaphroditus,' or La Casa's 'Capitolo del Forno,' the Roman Curia looked on and smiled approvingly. The most obscene books to be found in any literature escaped the Papal censure, and Aretino, notorious for ribaldry, aspired not wholly without reason to the scarlet of a cardinal. But even in the fifteenth century the taint of heresy was dangerous, and this peril was magnified when the Lutheran schism had roused the Papacy to a sense of its position. Under the patronage, therefore, of ecclesiastics, in the depraved atmosphere of Rome, the free thought of the Italians turned to licentiousness; this suited the temper of the people, fascinated by Paganism and little inclined to raise debate upon matters of no practical utility. Those who reflected on religious topics kept their own counsel. How purely political were the views of profound thinkers in Italy upon all Church questions may be gathered from the observations of Guicciardini and Machiavelli; how little the most earnest antagonist of ungodly ecclesiastics dreamed of disturbing the Catholic Church system is clear in the biography of Savonarola.<sup>2</sup> The first satire of Ariosto may be indicated as an epitome of the opinions entertained by sound and liberal intellects in Italy upon the relation of Papal Rome to the nation. There is not a trace in it of Teutonic revolt against authority, of pious yearning for a purer faith. The standpoint of the critic, though solid and sincere, is worldly.

True to culture as their main preoccupation, the Italian thinkers sought to philosophise faith by bringing Christianity into harmony with antique speculation, and forming for themselves a theism that should embrace the systems of the Platonists and Stoics, the Hebrew Cabbala and the Sermon on the Mount. There is much that strikes us as both crude and pedantic, at the same time infantine and pompous, in the systems elaborated by those pioneers of modern eclecticism. They lack the vigorous simplicity that gave its force to Luther's intuition, the sublime unity of Spinoza's deductions. The dross of erudition mingles

<sup>2</sup> See Vol. I., *Age of Despots*, pp. 153, 225-229, 266-269, where I have endeavoured to treat these topics more at length.

with the pure gold of personal conviction; while Pagan phrases, ill suited to express Christian notions, lend an air of unreality to the sincerest efforts after rational theology. The Platonic Academy of Florence was the centre of this search after the faith of culture, whereof the real merit was originality, and the true force lay in the conviction that humanity is one and indivisible. Its apostles were Pico della Mirandola and Ficino. It found lyrical expression in verses like the following, translated by me from the Greek hexameters of Polizano:—

O Father, Lord enthroned on gold, that dwellest in high heaven,  
 O King of all things, deathless God, Thou Pan supreme, celestial!  
 That seest all, and movest all, and all with might sustainest,  
 Older than oldest time, of all first, last, and without ending!  
 The firmament of blessed souls, of stars the heavenly splendour,  
 The giant sun himself, the moon that in her circle shineth,  
 And streams and fountains, earth and sea, are things of Thy creating,  
 Thou givest life to all; all these Thou with Thy Spirit fillest.  
 The powers of earth and powers of heaven, and they in pain infernal  
 Who pine below the roots of earth, all these obey Thy bidding.  
 Behold, I call upon Thee now, Thy creature on earth dwelling,  
 Poor, short of life, O God, of clay a mean unworthy mortal,  
 Repenting sorely of my sins, and tears of sorrow shedding.  
 O God, immortal Father, hear! I cry to Thee; be gracious,  
 And from my breast of this vain world the soul-enslaving passion,  
 The demon's wiles, the wilful lust, that damns the impious, banish!  
 Wash thoroughly all my heart with Thy pure Spirit's rain abundant,  
 That I may love Thee, Lord, alone, Thee, King of kings, for ever.

This is but a poor substitute for the Lord's Prayer. Hell and purgatory are out of place in its theism. *χρυσόθρονος* and *αἰθερι* *ναίων* are tawdry epithets for 'Our Father which art in heaven.' Yet is precisely in these contradictions and confusions that we trace the sincerity of the Renaissance spirit, seeking to fuse together the vitality of the old faith and the forms of novel culture, worshipping a Deity created in the image of its own mind, composite and incoherent.

Physically, the Italians of the Renaissance were equal to any task they chose to set themselves. No mistake is greater than to suppose that, because the summer climate of Italy is hotter than our own, therefore her children must be languid, pleasure-loving, and relaxed. Twelve months spent in Tuscany would suffice to dissipate illusions about the enervating Italian air, even if the history of ancient Rome were not proof that the hardest race of combatants and conquerors the world has ever seen were nurtured between Soracte and the sea. After the downfall of the Empire, what remained of native vigour in the Latin cities found a refuge in the lagoons of Venice and other natural strongholds. Walled towns in general retained a Roman population. The primitive Italic races still existed in the valleys of the Apennines, while the Ligurians held the Genoese Riviera; nor were the Etruscans extinct in Tuscany. It is true that Rome had fused these races into a people using the same language. Yet the ethnologist will hardly allow

that the differences noticeable between the several districts of Italy were not connected with original varieties of stock. To the people, as Rome had made it, fresh blood was added by the Goths, Lombards, and Germans descending from the North. Greeks, Arabs, Normans, and, in course of time, Franks influenced the South. During the Middle Ages a new and mighty breed of men sprang into being by the combination of these diverse elements, each district deriving specific quality from the varying proportions in which the chief constituents were mingled. It is noticeable that where the Roman-Etruscan blood was purest probably from mixture, in the valley of the Arno, the modern Italian genius found its home. Florence and her sister cities formed the language and the arts of Italy. To this race, in conjunction with the natives of Lombardy and Central Italy, was committed the civilisation of Europe in the fifteenth century. It was only south of Rome, where the brutalising traditions of the Roman *latifundia* had never yielded to the burgh-creating impulse of the Middle Ages, that the Italians were unfit for their great duty. On these southern states the Empire of the East, Saracen marauders and Norman conquerors, the French and the Spanish dynasties, had successively exercised a pernicious influence; nor did the imperial policy of Frederick II. remain long enough in operation to effect a radical improvement in the people. Even at Naples culture was always an exotic. Elsewhere throughout the peninsula the Italians of the new age were a noble nation, gifted with physical, emotional, and mental facilities in splendid harmony. In some districts, notably in Florence, circumstance and climate had been singularly favourable to the production of such glorious human beings as the world has rarely seen. Beauty of person, strength of body, and civility of manners were combined in the men of that favoured region with intellectual endowments of the highest order: nor were these gifts of nature confined to a caste apart; the whole population formed an aristocracy of genius.

In order to comprehend the greatness of this Italian type in the Renaissance, it is only needful to study the picture galleries of Florence or of Venice with special attention to the portraits they contain. When we compare those senators and sages with the subjects of Dürer's and of Cranach's art, we feel the physical superiority of the Italians. In like manner a comparison of the men of the fifteenth century with those of the sixteenth shows how much of that physical grandeur had been lost. It is easy to wander astray while weaving subtle theories on this path of criticism. Yet it cannot be a mere accident that Vandyck's portrait of the Cardinal de' Bentivogli in the Pitti Palace differs as it does from that of the Cardinal Ippolito de' Medici by Pontormo or by Titian. The Medici is an Italian of the Renaissance, with his imperious originality and defiance of convention. He has refused to be portrayed as an ecclesiastic. Titian has painted him in Hungarian costume of dark red velvet, moustache, and sworded like a soldier; in Pontormo's picture he wears a suit of mail, and rests his left hand on a

large white hound. The Bentivoglio is an Italian of the type produced by the Counter-Revolution. His delicate lace ruffs, the coquetry of his scarlet robes, and the fine keen cut of his diplomatic features betray a new spirit.<sup>3</sup> Surely the physical qualities of a race change with the changes in their thought and feeling. The beauty of Tasso is more feminine and melancholy than that of Ariosto, in whom the liberal genius of the Renaissance was yet alive. Among the scowling swordsmen of the seventeenth century you cannot find a face like Giorgione's Gattamelata;<sup>4</sup> the nobles who bear themselves so proudly on the canvases of Vandyck at Genoa lack the urbanity of Raphael's Castiglione; Moroni's black-robed students are more pinched and withered than the Pico of the Uffizzi. It will not do to strain such points. It is enough to suggest them. What remains, however, for certain is that the Italians of the fifteenth century—and among these must be included those who lived through the first half of the sixteenth—had physical force and character corresponding to their robust individuality. Until quite late in the Renaissance so much survived of feudal customs even in Italy that riding, the handling of the lance and sword, and all athletic exercises formed a part of education no less indispensable than mental training. Great cities had open places set apart for tournaments and games; in Tuscan burghs the *palio* was run on feast days, and May mornings saw the prentice lads of Florence tilting beneath the smiles of girls who danced at nightfall on the square of Santa Trinità. Bloody battles in the streets were frequent. The least provocation caused a man to draw his dagger. Combats *a steccato chiuso* were among the pastimes to which a Pope might lend his countenance. Skill in swordsmanship was therefore a necessity. For the rest, we learn from Castiglione that the perfect gentleman was bound to be an accomplished dancer, a bold rider, a skilled wrestler, a swift runner, to shoot well at the mark, to hurl the javelin and the quoit with grace, and to play at tennis and *pallone*. In addition he ought to affect some one athletic exercise in such perfection as to beat professors of the same on their own ground. Cesare Borgia took pride in felling an ox at a single blow, and exhibited his marksman's cunning by shooting condemned criminals in a courtyard of the Vatican.

That such men should have devoted their energies to intellectual culture at a time when English nobles could barely read or write, and when the chivalry of France regarded learning with disdain, was a proof of their rich natural endowments. Nor was the determination of the race to scholarship in any sense an accident. Throughout the length and breadth of Italy, memories of ancient greatness spurred her children on to emulation. Ghosts of Roman patriots and poets seemed

<sup>3</sup> It would be easy to multiply these contrasts, comprising, for example, the Cardinals Inghirami and Bibbiena and the Leo of Raphael with the Farnesi portraits at Modena or the grave faces of Moroni's patrons at Bergamo.

<sup>4</sup> Portrait in the Uffizzi, ascribed to Giorgione, but more probably by some pupil of Mantegna.

hovering round their graves, and calling on posterity to give them life again. If we cannot bring back Greece and Rome, at least let us make Florence a second Athens, and restore the Muses to Ausonian vales. That was the cry. It was while gazing on the ruins of Rome that Villani felt impelled to write his chronicle. Pavia honoured Boethius like a saint. Mantua struck coins with the head of Virgil, and Naples pointed out his tomb. Padua boasted of Livy, and Como of the Plinies. 'Sulmona,' cried Boccaccio, 'mourns because she holds not Ovid's dust; and Parma is glad that Cassius rests within her walls.' Such reverence for the great men of antiquity endured throughout the Middle Ages, creating myths that swayed the fancy, and forming in the popular consciousness a presentiment of the approaching age. There is something pathetic in the survival of old Roman titles, in the freak of the legend-making imagination that gave to Orlando the style of Roman senator, in the outburst of enthusiasm for Rienzi when he called himself *Tribunus Populi Romani*. With the Renaissance itself this affection for the past became a passion. Pius II. amnestied the people of Arpino because they were fellow-citizens of Cicero. Alfonse of Naples received as a most precious gift from Venice a bone supposed to be the leg of Livy. All the patricians of Italy invented classical pedigrees; and even Paul II., because he was called Barbo, claimed descent from the Ahenobarbi. Such instances might be multiplied indefinitely. It is, however, more to the purpose here to notice that in Italy this adoration of the antique world was common to all classes; not students alone, but the people at large regarded the dead grandeur of the classic age as their especial heritage. To resuscitate that buried glory, and to reunite themselves with the past, was the earnest aim of the Italians as a nation. A conviction prevailed that the modern world could never be so radiant as the old. This found its expression in the saying that Rome's chief ornaments were her ruins; in the belief that Julia's corpse, discovered in the Appian Way, surpassed all living maidens; in Matarazzo's observation that Astorre Baglioni's body was worthy of an ancient Roman. In their admiration for antiquity, scholars were blind to the specific glories of the modern genius. Lionardo Bruni, for example, exclaimed that 'the ancient Greeks by far excelled us Italians in humanity and gentleness of heart.' Yet what Greek poem can be compared for tenderness with Dante's 'Vita Nuova,' with the 'Canzoniere' of Petrarch, or with the tale of Griselda in Boccaccio? *Gentilezza di cuore* was the most characteristic product of chivalry, and the fourth *Æneid* is the only classic masterpiece of pure romantic pathos. This humility of discipleship was not, however, strong enough to check emulation. On the contrary, the yearning towards antiquity acted like a potent stimulus on personal endeavour, generating an acute desire for fame, a burning aspiration to be numbered with the mighty men of old. When Virgil introduced Dante to the company of Homer and his peers, the rank of *sesto tra cotanto senno* rewarded him for all his labour in the rhyme that made him thin through half a lifetime. Petrarch, who exceeded Dante in the



thirst for literary honour, turned from the men of his generation to converse in long epistles with the buried saints of Latin culture. For men of less ambition it was enough to feel that they could raise their souls through study to communion with the stately spirits of antiquity, passing like Machiavelli from trivial affairs into their closet, where they donned their reading-robes and shook hands across the centuries with Cicero or Livy. It was the universal object of the humanists to gain a consciousness of self distinguished from the vulgar herd, and to achieve this by joining the great company of bards and sages, whose glory could not perish.

Whoever felt within himself the stirring of the spirit under any form, sought earnestly for fame; and in this way a new social atmosphere, unknown to the nations of the Middle Ages, was formed in Italy. A large and liberal acceptance, recognising ability of all kinds, irrespective of rank or piety or martial prowess, displaced the narrower judgments of the Church and feudalism. Giotto, the peasant's son, ranked higher in esteem than Cimabue, the Florentine citizen, because his work of art was worthier. Petrarch had his place in no official capacity, but as an honoured equal, at the marriage feasts of princes. Poliziano corresponded with kings, promising immortality as a more than regal favour. Pomponius Lætus could afford to repel the advances of the Sanseverini, feeling that erudition ranked him higher than his princely kinsmen. It was not wealth or policy alone that raised the Medici among the Despots so far above the Baglioni of Perugia or the Petrucci of Siena. They owed this distinction rather to their comprehension of the craving of their age for culture. Thus though birth commanded respect for its own sake, a new standard of eminence had been established, and personal merit was the passport which carried the meanest into the most illustrious company. Men of all conditions and all qualifications met upon the common ground of intellectual intercourse. The subjects they discussed may be gathered from the introductions to Firenzuola's novels, from Bembo's 'Asolani' and Castiglione's 'Cortegiano,' from Guicciardini's 'Dialogue on Florence,' or from the 'Camaldolese Discourses' of Landino. Society of this kind existed nowhere else in Europe. To Italy belongs the proud priority of having invented the art of polite conversation, and anticipated the French *salon* after an original and urbane fashion of her own.

Under these conditions a genuine cultus of intellect sprang up in Italy. Princes and people shared a common impulse to worship the mental superiority of men who had no claim to notice but their genius. It was in the spirit of this hero-worship that the terrible Gismondo Pandolfo Malatesta transferred to Rimini the bones of Pletho, and wrote his impassioned epitaph upon the sarcophagus outside Alberti's church. The biographies of the humanists abound in stories of singular honours paid to men of parts, not only by princes who rejoiced in their society, but also by cities receiving them with public acclamation. And, as it often happens that a parody reveals the nature of the art it travesties,

such light is thrown upon our subject by the vile Pietro Aretino, who, because he was a man of talent and unscrupulous in its employment, held kings and potentates beneath his satyr's hoof. It is not, however, needful to go thus far afield for instances. Some lines of our own poet Webster exactly describe the Catholicity of the Renaissance, which first obtained in Italy for men of marked abilities, and afterwards to some extent prevailed at large in Europe:—

Virtue is ever sowing of her seeds:  
In the trenches for the soldier; in the wakeful study  
For the scholar; in the furrows of the sea  
For men of our profession: of all which  
Arise and spring up honour.

The virtue here described bears the Italian sense of *virtù*, the Latin *virtus*, the Greek *ἀρετή*, that which makes a man. It might display itself in a thousand ways; but all alike brought honour, and honour every man was bound to seek. The standard whereby the Italians judged this virtue was æsthetical rather than moral. They were too dazzled by brilliant achievement to test it in the crucible of ethics. This is the true key to Machiavelli's critique of Castruccio Castracane, Gianpaolo Baglioni, Cesare Borgia, and Piero Soderini. In common with his race, he was fascinated by character, and attached undue importance to the force that made men seek success even through crime.

The thirst for glory and the worship of ability stimulated the Italians, earlier than any other nation, to commemorate what seemed to them noteworthy in their own lives and in those of their contemporaries. Dante, within the pale of mediævalism, led the way in both of these directions. His 'Vita Nuova' is a chapter of autobiography restrained within the limits of consummate art. His portraits of S. Francis and S. Dominic (not to mention other medallions and cameos of predecessors or contemporaries—Farinata, for example, or Boniface VIII.) record the special qualities whereby those heroes of the faith were distinguished from the herd of men around them. Boccaccio's 'Life of Dante' is a further step in the direction of purely modern biography. Then follow the collections of Filippo Villani, Giovanni Cavalcanti, Vespasiano, Platina, Decembrio, Beccadelli, Caracciolo, and Paolo Giovio. Vasari's 'Lives of the Painters' are unique in their attempt to embrace within a single work whatever struck their author as most characteristic in the career of one particular class of men. For historical precision the portraits composed by Machiavelli, Guicciardini, Varchi, Pitti, and many of the minor annalists leave nothing to be desired. Such autobiographies as those of Petrarch, Cellini, Cardano, and Cornaro are models in their kind; whether their object were simply self-glorification, or whether a scientific and didactic purpose underlay the chronicle of a lifetime, the result is equally vivid and interesting. Hero-worship prompted Gian Francesco Pico to compose the 'Life of Savonarola,' and Condivi to write that of Michael Angelo. Scorn and

hatred impelled Platina to transmit the outline of Paul II. to posterity in a caricature, the irony of which is so restrained that it might pass for sincerity. Machiavelli's 'Biography of Castruccio' is a political romance indited with a philosophical intention. What motive, beyond admiration, produced the anonymous 'Memoir of Alberti,' terse in its portraiture, so tranquil in style, we do not know; but this too, like Prendilacqua's 'Life of Vittorino da Feltre,' is a masterpiece of natural delineation. For these biographies the works of Plutarch and Suetonius served no doubt as models. Yet this does not make the preoccupation of the Italians with the phenomena of personality the less remarkable.

Another phase of the same impulse led to special treatises upon ideal characters. The picture of the perfect householder was drawn by Alberti, that of the courtier by Castiglione, that of the prince by Machiavelli. Da Vinci discoursed upon the physical proportion of the human form. Firenzuola and Luigini analysed the beauty of women; Piccolomini undertook to describe the manners of a well-bred lady; and La Casa laid down rules for polite behaviour in society. The names of treatises of this description might easily be multiplied. Enough, however, has been said to show the tendency of the Italian intellect to occupy itself with salient qualities, whether exhibited in individuals or idealised and abstracted by the reflective fancy. The whole of this literature implies an intense self-consciousness in the nation, an ardent interest in men as men, because of the specific virtue to be found in each. The spirit, therefore, in which these authors of the Renaissance approached their task was wholly different from that which induced the mediæval annalist to register the miracles of saints, to chronicle the princes of some dynasty or the abbots of a convent. Nor had it much in common with the mythologising enthusiasm of romantic poets. The desire for edification and the fire of fancy had yielded to an impulse more strictly scientific, to a curiosity more positive.

The attention directed in literature and social intercourse upon great men implied a corresponding thirst for posthumous glory as a subjective quality of the Renaissance character. To perpetuate a name and fame was the most fervent passion, shared alike by artists and princes, by men of letters and by generals. It was not enough for a man to show forth the vigour that was in him, or to win the applause of his contemporaries. He must go beyond and wrest something permanent for himself from the ideal world that will survive our transient endeavours. When Alfonso the Magnanimous employed Fazio to compose his chronicle, when Francesco Sforza paid Filelfo for his verses by the dozen, when Cosimo de' Medici regretted that he had not spent more wealth on building, when Bartolommeo Colleoni decreed the erection of his chapel at Bergamo, and his statue on the public square of Venice, these men, so different in all things else, were striving, each after his own fashion, to buy an immortality his own achievements in the field or Senate might not win. Dante, here as elsewhere the first to utter the word

of the modern age, has given expression to this thirst for lasting recollection in his lines about the planet Mercury.<sup>5</sup>—

Questa picciola stella si corredda  
De' buoni spirti, che son stati attivi,  
Perchè onore e fama gli succeda.

At the same time Dante, imbued with the mystic spirit of the Middle Ages, felt an antagonism between worldly ambition and the ideal of the Christian life. There are other passages, where fame is mentioned by him as a fleeting breath, a flower that blooms and fades.<sup>6</sup> In truth, the passionate desire for glory was part of the Renaissance worldliness, caught from communion with the classic past, and connected with that vivid apprehension of human life which gave its vigour to an age of reawakened impulses and positive ambitions. This world was so much with them, so much to them, that these men would not lose their grasp of it in death, or willingly exchange it for a paradise of hopes beyond.

The enthusiasm for antiquity coloured this desire for fame by forcing on the Italians the conviction that in culture was the real title to eternity. How could they have entered into the spiritual kingdom of the Greeks and Romans, if it had not been for MSS. and works of art? It became the fashion, therefore, to seek immortality through literature. The study of the classics was not then confined to men of a peculiar bent. On all alike, even on women, there weighed the one belief that to be a scholar was the surest way of saving something from the wreck that is the doom of human deeds.<sup>7</sup> Only at rare intervals, and in rare natures of the type of Michael Angelo, did the Christian ideal resume its sway. Tired with the radiance of art or learning, they turned to the Cross of Christ, and laid their secular achievements down as vain and worthless. The time, however, had not yet come when a disgust of culture and an exhaustion of the intellect should make asceticism and monastic ecstasy acceptable once more. That belonged to the age of Spanish tyranny, and what is called the Counter-Reformation. For the real Renaissance Leo's memorable *imprimatur*, granted to the editors of Tacitus, struck the true key-note; while Sappho's solemn lines of warning to a friend careless of literature might be paraphrased to speak the feeling of Poliziano:—

Lo, thou shalt die,  
And lie  
Dumb in the silent tomb;  
Nor of thy name  
Shall there be any fame  
In ages yet to be or years to come:  
For of the rose

<sup>5</sup> *Paradiso*, vi. 112.

<sup>6</sup> Notably *Purg.* xi. 100-117.

<sup>7</sup> A curious echo of this Italian conviction may be traced in Fletcher's *Elder Brother*.

That on Pieria blows  
 Thou hast no share;  
 But in sad Hades' house,  
 Unknown, inglorious,  
 Mid the dim shades that wander there,  
 Shalt thou flit forth and haunt the filmy air.

These words found no uncertain echo in Renaissance Italy, where lads with long dark hair and liquid eyes left their loves to listen to a pedant's lectures, where Niccolo de' Niccoli wooed Piero de' Pazzi from a life of pleasure by the promise of a spiritual kingdom in the world of books. Piero was 'a man born with thy face and throat, Lyric Apollo.' His only object was to enjoy—*darsi buon tempo*, as the phrase of Florence hath it. Yet these words of the student: 'Seeing thou art the son of such a man, and of comely person, it is a shame thou dost not give thyself to learn Latin, the which would be unto thee a great ornament; and if thou dost not learn it, thou wilt be nought esteemed; the flower of youth once passed, thou wilt find thyself without virtue'—these words carried such weight, and sank so deeply into the young man's heart, that, smitten with the love of learning, he forsook his boon companions, engaged Pontano as house-tutor at a salary of one hundred golden florins, and spent his leisure time in learning Livy and the 'Æneid' by heart.<sup>8</sup> What he sought he gained; his name is still recorded, now that not only the bloom of youth, but life itself has passed away, and he has slept for nearly four centuries in Florentine earth. Yet we, no less wearied of erudition than Faust was, when he held the cup of laudanum in his hand and heard the Easter voices singing, may well ask ourselves what Piero carried with him to the grave more than Sardanapalus, over whom the Greeks inscribed their bitter epitaphs. Disenchanted and disillusioned as we are by those four centuries of learning, the musical lament of Dido and the stately periods of Latin prose are little better, considered as spiritual sustenance, to us than the husks that the swine did eat. How can we picture to ourselves the conditions of an age when scholarship was an evangel, forcing the Levis of Florence by the persuasion of its irresistible beauty to forsake the tables of the money-changers, tempting young men of great possessions to sell all and give to the Muses, making of Lucrezia Borgia herself the Magdalen of polite literature? Fortunately for the civilisation of the modern world, the men of the Renaissance, untroubled by a surfeit of knowledge, made none of these reflections. It was an age of sincere faith in the goodness and the glory of the intellect revealed by art and letters. When we read Vespasiano's account of the grey-haired Niccolo accosting the young Pazzi on the steps of the Bargello, our mind turns instinctively to an earlier dayspring of the reason in ancient Greece;

<sup>8</sup> Vespasiano, *Vita di Piero de' Pazzi*. Compare the beautiful letter of Æneas Sylvius Piccolomini to his nephew (*Ep. Lib. i. 4.*). He reminds the young man that fair as youth is, and delightful as are the pleasures of the May of life, learning is more fair and knowledge more delightful. 'Non enim Lucifer aut Hesperus tam pulcher est quam sapientia quæ studiis acquiritur litterarum.'

we think of the charm exercised by Socrates over Critias and Alcibiades: and had an Aristophanes appeared in Italy, we fancy how he might have criticised this seduction of the youth from citizenship and arms to tranquil contemplations and the cosmopolitan interests of culture.

It is not without real reason that these Hellenic parallels confront us in the study of Italian Renaissance. Florence borrowed her light from Athens, as the moon shines with rays reflected from the sun. The Revival was the silver age of that old golden age of Greece. In a literal, not a merely metaphorical sense, the fifteenth century witnessed a new birth of the classic spirit. And what, let us ask ourselves, since here at last is the burning point of our inquiry, what was the true note of this spirit, in so far as its recovery concerned the Italian race? Superficial observers will speak of the Paganism of the Renaissance, its unblushing license, its worldliness, its self-satisfied sensuality, as though that were all, as though these qualities were not inherent in human nature, ready at any moment to emerge when the strain of nobler enthusiasm is relaxed, or the self-preservative instincts of society are enfeebled. There is indeed a truth in this rough and ready answer, which requires to be stated on the threshold. The contact of the modern with the ancient world did encourage a profligate and godless mode of living in men who preferred Petronius to S. Paul, and yearned less after Galilee than Corinth. The humanists were distinguished even above the Roman clergy for open disorder in their lives. They developed filthy speaking as a special branch of rhetoric, and professed the science of recondite and obsolete obscenity. It was just this fashion of the learned classes that made Erasmus mistrust the importation of scholarship into the North. 'One scruple still besets my mind,' he wrote, 'lest under the cloak of revived literature Paganism should strive to raise its head, there being among Christians men who, while they recognise the name of Christ, breathe in their hearts the spirit of the Gentiles.' Christianity, especially in Italy, where the spectacle of the Holy See inspired disgust, had been prostituted to the vilest service by the Church.<sup>9</sup> Faith was associated with folly, superstition, ignorance, intolerance, and cruelty. The manners of the clergy were in flagrant discord with the Gospel, and Antichrist found fitter incarnation in Roderigo Borgia than in Nero. While the essence of religion was thus sacrificed by its professors, there appeared upon the horizon of the modern world, like some bright blazing star, the ideal of that Pagan civilisation against which in its decadence that ascendant force of Christianity had striven. It was not unnatural that a reaction in favour of Paganism, now that the Church had been found wanting, should ensue, or that the passions of humanity should justify their self-indulgence by appealing to the precedents of Greece and Rome. Good and bad were mingled in the classical tradition. Vices, loathsome enough in a Pope who had instituted the censure of the press, seemed venial when combined with the

<sup>9</sup> It is enough to refer to Luther's *Table Talk* upon the state of Rome in Leo's reign.

manliness of Hadrian or the refined charm of Catullus. Sin itself lost half its evil coming from the new-found Holy Land of culture. Still this so-called Paganism of the Renaissance, real as it was, had but a superficial connection with classical studies. The corruption of the Church and the political degeneracy of the commonwealths had quite as much to do with it as the return to heathen standards. Nor could the Renaissance have been the great world-historical era it truly was, if such demoralisation had been a part and parcel of its essence. Crimes and vices are not the hotbed of arts and literature: lustful priests and cruel despots were not necessary to the painting of Raphael or the poetry of Ariosto. The faults of the Italians in the age of the Renaissance were neither productive of their high achievements, nor conversely were they generated by the motion of the intellect toward antique forms of culture. The historian notes synchronisms, whereof he is not bound to prove the interdependence, and between which he may feel there is no causal link.

It does not, moreover, appear that the demoralisation of Italian society, however this may have been brought about, produced either physical or intellectual degeneration in the people. Commercial prosperity, indeed, had rendered them inferior in brute strength to their semi-barbarous neighbours; while the cosmopolitan interests of culture had destroyed the energy of national instincts. But it would be wrong to charge their neopaganism alone with results whereof the causes were so complex.

Meanwhile, what gave its deep importance to the classical revival, was the emancipation of the reason, consequent upon the discovery that the best gifts of the spirit had been enjoyed by the nations of antiquity. An ideal of existence distinct from that imposed upon the Middle Ages by the Church, was revealed in all its secular attractiveness. Fresh value was given to the desires and aims, enjoyments and activities of man, considered as a noble member of the universal life, and not as a diseased excrescence on the world he helped to spoil. Instead of the cloistral service of the 'Imitatio Christi,' that conception of communion, through knowledge, with God manifested in His works and in the soul of man, which forms the indestructible religion of science and the reason, was already generated. The intellect, after lying spell-bound during a long night, when thoughts were as dreams and movement as somnambulism, resumed its activity, interrogated nature, and enjoyed the pleasures of unimpeded energy. Without ceasing to be Christians (for the moral principles of Christianity are the inalienable possession of the human race), the men of the Revival dared once again to exercise their thought as boldly as the Greeks and Romans had done before them. More than this, they were now able, as it were, by the resuscitation of a lost faculty, to do so freely and clear-sightedly. The touch upon them of the classic spirit was like the finger of a deity giving life to the dead.

That more and nobler use was not made of the new light which



dawned upon the world in the Revival; that the humanists abandoned the high standpoint of Petrarch for a lower and more literary level; that society assimilated the Hedonism more readily than the Stoicism of the ancients; that scholars occupied themselves with the form rather than the matter of the classics; that all these shortcomings in their several degrees prevented the Italians from leading the intellectual movement of the sixteenth century in religion and philosophy, as they had previously led the mind of Europe in discovery and literature—is deeply to be lamented by those who are jealous for their honour. For the rest, no words can be found more worthy to express their high conception of man, regarded as a free yet responsible personality, sent into the world to mould his own nature, and by this power of self-determination severed from both brutes and angels, than the following passage from Pico della Mirandola's 'Oration on the Dignity of Man.' It combines antique liberty of thought with Christian faith in a style distinctive of the Renaissance at its best; nor is its note of mediæval cosmology uncharacteristic of an age that divined as yet more than it firmly grasped the realities of modern science. Here, if anywhere, may be hailed the Epiphany of the modern spirit, contraposing God and man in a relation inconceivable to the ancients, unapprehended in its fulness by the Middle Ages. 'Then the Supreme Maker decreed that unto Man, on whom He could bestow nought singular, should belong in common whatsoever had been given to His other creatures. Therefore He took man, made in His own individual image, and having placed him in the centre of the world, spake to him thus: "Neither a fixed abode, nor a form in thine own likeness, nor any gift peculiar to thyself alone, have we given thee, O Adam, in order that what abode, what likeness, what gifts thou shalt choose, may be thine to have and to possess. The nature allotted to all other creatures, within laws appointed by ourselves, restrains them. Thou, restrained by no narrow bounds, according to thy own free will, in whose power I have placed thee, shalt define thy nature for thyself. I have set thee midmost the world, that thence thou mightest the more conveniently survey whatsoever is in the world. Nor have we made thee either heavenly or earthly, mortal or immortal, to the end that thou, being, as it were, thy own free maker and moulder, shouldst fashion thyself in what form may like thee best. Thou shalt have power to decline unto the lower or brute creatures. Thou shalt have power to be reborn unto the higher, or divine, according to the sentence of thy intellect." Thus to Man, at his birth, the Father gave seeds of all variety and germs of every form of life.'

Out of thoughts like these, if Italy could only have been free, if her society could have been uncorrupted, if her Church could have returned to the essential truths of Christianity, might have sprung, as from a seed, the noblest growth of human science. But *dis aliter visum est*. The prologue to this history of culture—the long account taken of selfish tyrants, vicious clergy, and incapable republics, in my 'Age of the Despots'—is intended to make it clear why the conditions under which the Renaissance began in Italy rendered its accomplishment imperfect.

## CHAPTER II

### FIRST PERIOD OF HUMANISM

*Importance of the Revival of Learning—Mediæval Romance—The Legend of Faustus—Its Value for the Renaissance—The Devotion of Italy to Study—Italian Predisposition for this Labour—Scholarship in the Dark Ages—Double Attitude assumed by the Church—Piety for Virgil—Meagre Acquaintance with the Latin Classics—No Greek Learning—The Spiritual Conditions of the Middle Ages adverse to Pure Literature—Italy no exception to the rest of Europe—Dante and Petrarch—Definition of Humanism—Petrarch's Conception of it—His Aesthetic Temperament—His Cult for Cicero, Zeal in collecting Manuscripts, Sense of the Importance of Greek Studies—Warfare against Pedantry and Superstition—Ideal of Poetry and Rhetoric—Critique of Jurists and Schoolmen—S. Augustine—Petrarch's Vanity—Thirst for Fame—Discord between his Life and his Profession—His Literary Temperament—Visionary Patriotism—His Influence—His Successors—Boccaccio and Greek Studies—Translation of Homer—Philosophy of Literature—Sensuousness of Boccaccio's Inspiration—Giovanni da Ravenna—The Wandering Professor—His Pupils in Latin Scholarship—Luigi Marsigli—The Convent of S. Spirito—Humanism in Politics—Coluccio de' Salutati—Gasparino da Barzizza—Improved Style in Letter-writing—Revival of Greek Learning—Manuel Chrysoloras—His Pupils—Lionardo Bruni—Value of Greek for the Renaissance.*

I HAVE already observed that it would be inaccurate to identify the whole movement of the Renaissance with the process whereby the European nations recovered and appropriated the masterpieces of Greek and Latin literature. At the same time this reconquest of the classic world of thought was by far the most important achievement of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It absorbed nearly the whole mental energy of the Italians, and determined in a great measure the quality of all their intellectual production in the period I have undertaken to illustrate. Through their activity in the field of scholarship the proper starting-point was given to the modern intellect. The revelation of what men were and what they wrought under the influence of other faiths and other impulses, in distant ages with a different ideal for their aim, not only widened the narrow horizon of the Middle Ages, but it also restored self-confidence to the reason of humanity. Research and criticism began to take the place of scholastic speculation. Positive knowledge was substituted for the intuitive guesses of idealists and dreamers. The interests of this world received their due share of attention, and the *litteræ humaniores* of the student usurped upon the *divinarum rerum cognitio* of theologians.

All through the Middle Ages uneasy and imperfect memories of Greece and Rome had haunted Europe. Alexander, the great conqueror; Hector, the noble knight and lover; Helen, who set Troy town

on fire; Virgil, the magician; Dame Venus lingering about the hill of Hörsel—these phantoms, whereof the positive historic truth was lost, remained to sway the soul and stimulate desire in myth and saga. Deprived of actual knowledge, imagination transformed what it remembered of the classic age into romance. The fascination exercised by these dreams of a half-forgotten past over the mediæval fancy expressed itself in the legend of Doctor Faustus. That legend tells us what the men upon the eve of the Revival longed for, and what they dreaded, when they turned their minds towards the past. The secret of enjoyment and the source of strength possessed by the ancients allured them; but they believed that they could only recover this lost treasure by the suicide of their soul. So great was the temptation that Faustus paid the price. After imbibing all the knowledge of his age, he sold himself to the Devil, in order that his thirst for experience might be quenched, his grasp upon the world be strengthened, and the ennui of his inactivity be soothed. His first use of this dearly-bought power was to make blind Homer sing to him. Amphion tunes his harp in concert with Mephistopheles. Alexander rises from the dead at his behest, with all his legionaries; and Helen is given to him for a bride. Faustus is therefore a parable of the impotent yearnings of the spirit in the Middle Ages—its passionate aspiration, its conscience-stricken desire, its fettered curiosity amid the cramping limits of imperfect knowledge and irrational dogmatism. That for which Faustus sold his soul, the freedom he acquired by magic, the sense of beauty he gratified through visions, the knowledge he gained by interrogation of demons, was yielded to the world without price at the time of the Renaissance. Homer, no longer by the intervention of a fiend, but by the labour of the scholar, sang to the new age. The pomp of the empires of the old world was restored in the pages of historians. The indestructible beauty of Greek art, whereof Helen was an emblem, became, through the discovery of classic poetry and sculpture, the possession of the modern world. Mediævalism took this Helen to wife, and their offspring, the Euphorion of Goethe's drama, is the spirit of the modern world. But how was this effected? By long and toilsome study, by the accumulation of MSS., by the acquisition of dead languages, by the solitary labour of grammarians, by the lectures of itinerant professors, by the scribe, by the printing press, by the self-devotion of magnificent Italy to erudition. In this way the Renaissance realised the dream of the Middle Ages, and the genius of the Italians wrought by solid toil what the myth-making imagination of the Germans had projected in a poem.

It is impossible to exaggerate the benefit conferred upon Europe by the Italians at this epoch. The culture of the classics had to be re-appropriated before the movement of the modern mind could begin: before the nations could start upon a new career of progress, the chasm between the old and new world had to be bridged over. This task of reappropriation the Italians undertook alone, and achieved at the sacrifice of their literary independence and their political freedom. The

history of Renaissance literature in Italy is the history of a national genius deviating from the course of self-development into the channels of scholarship and antiquarian research. The language created by Dante as a thing of power, polished by Petrarch as a thing of beauty, trained by Boccaccio as the instrument of melodious prose, was abandoned even by the Tuscans in the fifteenth century for revived Latin and newly-discovered Greek. Patent acquisition took the place of proud inventiveness; laborious imitation of classical authors suppressed originality of style. The force of mind which in the fourteenth century had produced a 'Divine Comedy' and a 'Decameron,' in the fifteenth was expended upon the interpretation of codices, the settlement of texts, the translation of Greek books into Latin, the study of antiquities, the composition of commentaries, encyclopædias, dictionaries, ephemerides. While we regret this change from creative to acquisitive literature, we must bear in mind that those scholars who ought to have been poets accomplished nothing less than the civilisation, or, to use their own phrase, the humanisation, of the modern world.<sup>1</sup> At the critical moment when the Eastern Empire was being shattered by the Turks, and when the other European nations were as yet unfit for culture, Italy saved the arts and sciences of Greece and Rome, and interpreted the spirit of the classics. Devoting herself to what appears the slavish work of compilation and collection, she transmitted an inestimable treasure to the human race; and though for a time the beautiful Italian tongue was superseded by a jargon of dead languages, yet the literature of the Renaissance yielded in the end the poetry of Ariosto, the political philosophy of Machiavelli, the histories of Guicciardini and Varchi. Meanwhile the whole of Europe had received the staple of its intellectual education.

It is necessary to repeat the observation that this absorption of energy in the task of scholarship was no less natural to the Italians than necessary for the world at large. The Italians were not a new nation like the Franks and Germans. Nothing is more remarkable in the mediæval history of Italy than the sense, shared alike by poets and jurists, by the leaders of popular insurrections and the moulders of philosophic thought, that the centre of national vitality existed in the Roman Empire. It was this determination to look backward rather than forward, to trust the past rather than the present, that neutralised the forces of the Lombard League, and prevented the communes from asserting their independence face to face with foreigners who claimed to be the representatives of Cæsar. The Italians, unlike any other European people, sacrificed the reality of political freedom for the idea of majesty and glory, to be recovered by the restitution of the Empire. Guelf and Ghibelline coincided in this delusion, that Rome, whether Papal or Imperial, was destined still to place the old Italic stock upon

<sup>1</sup> Poliziano, Pontano, Sannazzaro, and Bembo divided their powers between scholarship and poetry, to the injury of the latter.

the throne of civilised humanity. When the three great authors of the thirteenth century appeared, each in turn cast his eyes to ancient Rome as the true source of national greatness. The language of modern Italy was known to be a scion of the Latin speech, and the Italians called themselves *Latini*. The attempt to conform their literature to the Roman type was therefore felt to be but a return to its true standard; the 'Æneid' of Virgil was their *Nibelungen-Lied*. Thus the humanistic enthusiasm of the fifteenth century assumed an almost patriotic character. In it, moreover, the doctrine that had ruled the Middle Ages, interrupting political cohesion without acquiring the consistency of fact, attained at last its proper sphere of development. The ideal of Dante in the 'De Monarchiâ' had proved a baseless dream; no emperor was destined to take his seat in Rome and sway the world. But the ideal of Petrarch was realised; the scholars, animated by his impulse, re-acquired the birthright of culture which belonged of old to Italy, and made her empress of the intellect for Europe. Not political but spiritual supremacy was the real heritage of these new Romans.

As an introduction to the history of the Revival, and in order that the work to be performed by the Italian students may be accurately measured, it will be necessary to touch briefly upon the state of scholarship during the dark ages. To underrate the achievement of that period, especially in logic, theology, and law, is only too easy, seeing that a new direction was given to the mind of Europe by the Renaissance, and that we have moved continuously on other lines to other objects since the opening of the fifteenth century. Mediæval thought was both acute and strenuous in its own region of activity. What it lacked was material outside the speculative sphere to feed upon. Culture, in our sense of the word, did not exist, and the intellect was forced to deal subtly with a very limited class of conceptions.

Long before the fall of the Roman Empire it became clear that both fine arts and literature were gradually declining. Sculpture in the age of Constantine had lost distinction of style; and though the practice of verse survived as a rhetorical exercise, no works of original genius were produced. Ausonius and Claudian, just before the division of the Empire and the irruption of the barbarian races, uttered the last swan's note of classic poetry. Meanwhile true taste and criticism were extinct.<sup>2</sup> The Church, while battling with Paganism, recognised her deadliest foes in literature. Not only were the Greek and Latin masterpieces the stronghold of a mythology that had to be erased from the popular mind; not only was their morality antagonistic to the principles of Christian ethics: in addition to these grounds for hatred and mistrust, the classics idealised a form of human life which the new faith regarded as worthless. What was culture in comparison with the salvation of the soul?

<sup>2</sup> For the low state of criticism, even in a good age, see Aulus Gellius, lib. xiv. cap. vi. He describes the lecture of a rhetor, *quispiam linguæ Latinæ literator*, on a passage in the seventh Æneid. The man's explanation of the word *bidentes* proves an almost more than mediæval puerility and ignorance.

Why should time be spent upon the dreams of poets, when every minute might be well employed in pondering the precepts of the Gospels? What was the use of making this life refined and agreeable by study, when it formed but an insignificant prelude to an eternity wherein mere mundane learning would be valueless? Why raise questions about man's condition on this earth, when the creeds had to be defined and expounded, when the nature of God and the relation of the human soul to its Creator had to be established? It was easy to pass from this state of mind to the belief that learning in itself was impious.<sup>3</sup> 'Let us shun the lying fables of the poets,' cries Gregory of Tours, 'and forego the wisdom of sages at enmity with God, lest we incur the doom of endless death by sentence of our Lord.' Even Augustine deplored his time spent in reading Virgil, weeping over Dido's death by love, when all the while he was himself both morally and spiritually dead. Alcuin regretted that in his boyhood he had preferred Virgil to the legends of the Saints, and stigmatised the eloquence of the Latin writers by the epithet of wanton. Such phrases as *poetarum figmenta*, *gentilium figmenta sive deliramenta* (the fictions or mad ravings of Pagan poets) are commonly employed by Christian authors of the Lives of Saints, in order to mark the inferiority of Virgil and Ovid to their own more edifying compositions. Relying on their spiritual pretensions, the monkish scribes gloried in ignorance and paraded want of grammar as a sign of grace. 'I warn the curious reader,' writes a certain Wolfhard in the 'Life of S. Walpurgis,' 'not to mind the mass of barbarisms in this little work; I bid him ponder what he finds upon these pages, and seek the pearl within the dung-heap.' Gregory the Great goes further, and defies the pedantry of pedagogues. 'The place of prepositions and the cases of the nouns I utterly despise, since I deem it unfit to confine the words of the celestial oracle within the rules of Donatus.' 'Let philosophers and impure scholars of Donatus,' writes a fanatic of Cordova, 'ply their windy problems with the barking of dogs, the grunting of swine, snarling with skinned throat and teeth; let the foaming and bespittled grammarians belch, while we remain evangelical servants of Christ, true followers of rustic teachers.' Thus the opposition of the Church to Paganism, the conviction that Christianity was alien to culture, and the absorption of intellectual interest in theological questions contributed to destroy what had remained of sound scholarship in the last years of the Empire. The task of the Church, moreover, in the Middle Ages was not so much to keep learning alive as to moralise the savage races who held Europe at their pleasure. Pure Latinity, even if it could have been instilled into the nations of the North, was of less moment than elementary discipline in manners and religion. It must not be forgotten that the literature of ancient Rome was artificial in its best days, confined to a select few, and dependent on the capital for its support. After the dismemberment of

<sup>3</sup> Most of the following quotations will be found in Comparetti, *Virgilio nel Medio Evo*, vol. i., a work of sound scholarship and refined taste upon the place of Virgil in the Middle Ages.

the Empire the whole of Europe was thrown open to the action of spiritual powers who had to use unlettered barbarians for their ministers and missionaries. To submit this vast field to classic culture at the same time that Christianity was being propagated, would have been beyond the strength of the Church, even had she chosen to undertake this task, and had the vital forces of antiquity not been exhausted.

At this point an inevitable reaction, illustrating the compromise thrust upon the Church by her peculiar position, made itself apparent. In proportion as the dangers of Paganism decreased, the clergy, on whom devolved the double duty of civilising as well as moralising society, began to feel the need of arresting the advance of ignorance. Knowledge of Latin was required for ecclesiastical uses, for the interpretation of Scripture, for the study of the Fathers, and for the establishment of a common language among many divers nationalities. A middle course between the fanaticism which regarded classical literature as worthless and impure, and the worldliness that might have been encouraged by enthusiasm for the ancients, had therefore to be steered. Grammar was taught in the schools, and where grammar was taught, it was impossible to exclude Virgil and some other Latin authors. A conflict in the monkish mind was the unavoidable consequence. Since the classics alone communicated sound learning, the study of them formed a necessary part of education; and yet these authors were unbaptized Pagans, doomed to everlasting death because of their impiety and immorality. Poets who had hitherto been regarded as deadly foes, were now accepted as auxiliaries in the battle of the Church against barbarism. While copying the elegies of Ovid, the compassionate scribe sought to place them in a favourable light, and to render them edifying at the cost of contradicting their plain meaning.<sup>4</sup> Virgil was credited with allegorical significance; and the strong sympathy he roused in those who felt the beauty of his style, produced a belief that, if not quite, he was almost a Christian. The piety and pity for Virgil as a gentle soul who had just missed the salvation offered by Christ found expression in the service for S. Paul's Day used at Mantua:<sup>5</sup>—

Ad Maronis mausoleum  
Ductus, fudit super eum  
    Piæ rorem lacrymæ;  
Quem te, inquit, reddidissem  
Si te vivum invenissem,  
    Poetarum maxime!

<sup>4</sup> *Hoc est quod pueri tangar amore minus*, for example, was altered into *Hoc est quod pueri tangar amore nihil*; for *luisisset amores* was substituted *dampnasset amores*, and so forth.

<sup>5</sup> The hymn quoted above in the text refers to a legend of S. Paul having visited the tomb of Virgil at Naples:—

When to Maro's tomb they brought him  
Tender grief and pity wrought him  
    To bedew the stone with tears;  
What a saint I might have crowned thee,  
Had I only living found thee,  
    Poet first and without peers!



Meanwhile the utter confusion consequent upon the downfall of the Roman Empire and the irruption of the Germanic races was causing, by the mere brute force of circumstance, a gradual extinction of scholarship too powerful to be arrested. The teaching of grammar for ecclesiastical purposes was insufficient to check the influence of many causes leading to this overthrow of learning. It was impossible to communicate more than a mere tincture of knowledge to students separated from the classical tradition, for whom the antecedent history of Rome was a dead letter. The meaning of Latin words derived from the Greek was lost. Smaragdus, a grammarian, mistook *Eumuchus Comædia* and *Orestes Tragædia*, mentioned by Donatus, for the names of authors. Remigius of Auxerre explained *poema* by *positio*, and *emblema* by *habundantia*. Homer and Virgil were supposed to have been friends and contemporaries, while the Latin epitome of the 'Iliad,' bearing the name of Pindar, was fathered on the Theban lyrist. Theological notions, grotesque and childish beyond description, found their way into etymology and grammar. The three persons of the Trinity were discovered in the verb, and mystic numbers in the parts of speech. Thus analytical studies like that of language came to be regarded as an open field for the exercise of the mythologising fancy; and etymology was reduced to a system of ingenious punning. *Voluntas* and *voluptas* were distinguished, for example, as pertaining to the nature of *Deus* and *diabolus* respectively; and, in order to make the list complete, *voluntas* was invented as an attribute of *homo*. It is clear that on this path of verbal quibbling the intellect had lost tact, taste, and common sense together.

When the minds of the learned were possessed by these absurdities to the exclusion of sound method, we cannot wonder that antiquity survived but as a strange and shadowy dream in popular imagination. Virgil, the only classic who retained distinct and living personality, passed from poet to philosopher, from philosopher to Sibyl, from Sibyl to magician, by successive stages of transmutation, as the truth about him grew more dim and the faculty to apprehend him weakened. Forming the staple of education in the schools of the grammarians, and metamorphosed by the vulgar consciousness into a wizard,<sup>6</sup> he waited on the extreme verge of the dark ages to take Dante by the hand, and lead him, as the type of human reason, through the realms of Hell and Purgatory.

With regard to the actual knowledge of Latin literature possessed in the Middle Ages, it may be said in brief that Virgil was continually studied, and that a certain familiarity with Ovid, Lucan, Horace, Juvenal, and Statius was never lost. Among the prose-writers, portions of Cicero were used in education; but the compilations of Boethius, Priscian, Donatus, and Cassiodorus were more widely used. In the twelfth century the study of Roman law was revived, and the scholastic habit of thought found scope for subtlety in the discussion of cases and

<sup>6</sup> The common use of the word *grammarie* for occult science in our ballads illustrates this phase of popular opinion. So does the legend of Friar Bacon. See Thoms, *Early English Prose Romances*.

composition of glosses. The general knowledge and intellectual sympathy required for comprehension of the genuine classics were, however, wanting; and thus it happened that their place was taken by epitomes and abstracts, and by the formal digests of the Western Empire in its decadence. This lifeless literature was better suited to the meagre intellectual conditions of the Middle Ages than the masterpieces of the Augustan and Silver periods.

Of Greek there was absolutely no tradition left.<sup>7</sup> When the names of Greek poets or philosophers are cited by mediæval authors, it is at second hand from Latin sources; and the Aristotelian logic of the schoolmen came through Latin translations made by Jews from Arabian MSS. Occasionally it might happen that a Western scholar acquired Greek at Constantinople or in the south of Italy, where it was spoken; but this did not imply Hellenic culture, nor did such knowledge form a part and parcel of his erudition. Greek was hardly less lost to Europe then than Sanskrit in the first half of the eighteenth century.

The meagreness of mediæval learning was, however, a less serious obstacle to culture than the habit of mind, partly engendered by Christianity and partly idiosyncratic to the new races, which prevented students from appreciating the true spirit of the classics. While mysticism and allegory ruled supreme, the clearly-defined humanity of the Greeks and Romans could not fail to be misapprehended. The little that was known of them reached students through a hazy and distorting medium. Poems like Virgil's fourth Eclogue were prized for what the author had not meant when he was writing them; while his real interests were utterly neglected. Against this mental misconception, this original obliquity of vision, this radical lie in the intellect, the restorers of learning had to fight at least as energetically as against brute ignorance and dulness. It was not enough to multiply books and to discover codices; they had to teach men how to read them, to explain their inspiration, to defend them against prejudice, to protect them from false methods of interpretation. To purge the mind of fancy and fable, to prove that poetry apart from its supposed prophetic meaning was delightful for its own sake, and that the history of the antique nations, in spite of Paganism, could be used for profit and instruction, was the first step to be taken by these pioneers of modern culture. They had, in short, to create a new mental sensibility by establishing the truth that pure literature directly contributes to the dignity and happiness of human beings. The achievement of this revolution in thought was the great performance of the Italians in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

During the dark ages Italy had in no sense enjoyed superiority of culture over the rest of Europe. On the contrary, the first abortive attempt at a revival of learning was due to Charlemagne at Aix, the second to the Emperor Frederick in Apulia and Sicily; and while the

<sup>7</sup> Didot, in his *Life of Aldus*, tries to make out that Greek learning survived in Ireland longer than elsewhere.

Romance nations had lost the classical tradition, it was still to some extent preserved by the Moslem dynasties. The more we study the history of mediæval learning, the more we recognise the debt of civilised humanity to the Arabs for their conservation and transmission of Greek thought in altered form to Europe. Yet, though the Italians came comparatively late into the field, their action was decisive. Neither Charlemagne nor Frederick, neither the philosophy of the Arabian sages nor the precocious literature of Provence, succeeded in effecting for the education of the modern intellect that which Dante and Petrarch performed—the one by the production of a monumental work of art in poetry, the other by the communication of a new enthusiasm for antiquity to students.

Dante does not belong in any strict sense to the history of the Revival of Learning. The 'Divine Comedy' closes the Middle Ages and preserves their spirit. It stands before the vestibule of modern literature like a solitary mountain at the entrance of a country rich in all varieties of landscape. In order to become acquainted with its grandeur, we must leave the fields and forests that we know, ascend the heights, and use ourselves to an austerer climate. In spite of this isolation, Dante's influence was powerful upon succeeding generations. The modern mind first found in him its scope, and recognised its freedom; first dared and did what placed it on a level with antiquity in art. Many ideas, moreover, destined to play an important part in the coming age, received from him their germinal expression. It may thus be truly said that Dante initiated the movement of the modern intellect in its entirety, though he did not lead the Revival considered as a separate moment in this evolution. That service was reserved for Petrarch.

There are spots upon the central watershed of Europe where, in the stillness of a summer afternoon, the traveller may listen to the murmurs of two streams—the one hurrying down to form the Rhine, the other to contribute to the Danube or the Po. Born within hearing of each other's voices, and nourished by the self-same clouds that rest upon the crags around them, they are henceforth destined to an ever-widening separation. While the one sweeps onward to the Northern seas, the other will reach the shores of Italy or Greece and mingle with the Mediterranean. To these two streamlets we might compare Dante and Petrarch, both of whom sprang from Florence, both of whom were nurtured in the learning of the schools and in the lore of chivalrous love. Yet how different was their mission! Petrarch marks the rising of that great river of intellectual energy which flowed southward to recover the culture of the ancient world. The current of Dante's genius took the contrary direction. Borne upon its mighty flood, we visit the lands and cities of the Middle Ages, floating toward infinities divined and made the heritage of human nature by the mediæval spirit.

In speaking of Petrarch here, it is necessary to concentrate attention upon his claims to be considered as the apostle of scholarship, the inaugurator of the humanistic impulse of the fifteenth century. We

have nothing to do with his Italian poetry. The *Rime* dedicated to Madonna Laura have eclipsed the fame of the Latin epic, philosophical discourses, epistles, orations, invectives, and dissertations, which made Petrarch the Voltaire of his own age, and on which he thought his immortality would rest. Yet it is with these latter products of his genius, not with the *Canzoniere*, that we are now concerned; nor can it be too emphatically asserted that his originality was even more eminently displayed in the revelation of humanism to the modern world than in the verses that impressed their character upon Italian literature. To have foreseen a whole new phase of European culture, to have interpreted its spirit, and determined by his own activity the course it should pursue, is in truth a higher title to fame than the composition of even the most perfect sonnets. The artist, however, has this advantage over the pioneer of intellectual progress, that his delicate creations are indestructible, and that his work cannot be merged in that of a continuator. Therefore Petrarch lives and will live in the memory of millions as the poet of Laura, while only students know how much the world owes to his humanistic ardour.

As I cannot dispense with the word Humanism in this portion of my work, it may be well to fix the sense I shall attach to it.<sup>8</sup> The essence of humanism consisted in a new and vital perception of the dignity of man as a rational being apart from theological determinations, and in the further perception that classic literature alone displayed human nature in the plenitude of intellectual and moral freedom. It was partly a reaction against ecclesiastical despotism, partly an attempt to find the point of unity for all that had been thought and done by man, within the mind restored to consciousness of its own sovereign faculty. Hence the single-hearted devotion to the literature of Greece and Rome that marks the whole Renaissance era. Hence the watchword of that age, the *Litteræ Humaniores*. Hence the passion for antiquity, possessing thoughtful men, and substituting a new authority for the traditions of the Church. Hence the so-called Paganism of centuries bent upon absorbing and assimilating a spirit no less life-giving from their point of view than Christianity itself. Hence the persistent effort of philosophers to find the meeting-point of two divergent inspirations. Hence, too, the ultimate antagonism between the humanists, or professors of the new wisdom, and those uncompromising Christians who, like S. Paul, preferred to remain fools for Christ's sake.

Humanism in this, the widest, sense of the word was possessed by Petrarch intuitively. It belonged to his nature as much as music to Mozart; so that he seemed sent into the world to raise, by the pure exercise of innate faculties, a standard for succeeding workers. Physically and æsthetically, by the fineness of his ear for verbal harmonies,

<sup>8</sup> The word Humanism has a German sound, and is in fact modern. Yet the generic phrase *umanità* for humanistic culture, and the name *umanista* for a professor of humane studies, are both pure Italian. Ariosto, in his seventh satire, line 25, writes—

'Senza quel vizio son pochi umanisti.'

and by the exquisiteness of his sensibilities, he was fitted to divine what it took centuries to verify. While still a boy, long before he could grasp the meaning of classical Latin, he used to read the prose of Cicero aloud, delighting in the sonorous cadence and balanced periods of the master's style.<sup>9</sup> Nor were the moral qualities of industry and perseverance, needed to supplement these natural gifts, defective. In his maturity he spared no pains to collect the manuscripts of Cicero, sometimes transcribing them with his own hand, sometimes employing copyists, sending and journeying to distant parts of Europe where he heard a fragment of his favourite author might be found.<sup>10</sup> His greatest literary disappointment was the loss of a treatise by Cicero on Glory, a theme exceedingly significant for the Renaissance, which he lent to his tutor Convennevole, and which the old man pawned.<sup>11</sup> Though he could not read Greek, he welcomed with profoundest reverence the codices of Homer and Plato sent to him from Constantinople, and exhorted Boccaccio to dedicate his genius to the translation of the sovran poet into Latin.<sup>12</sup> In this susceptibility to the melodies of rhetorical prose, in this special cult of Cicero, in the passion for collecting manuscripts, and in the intuition that the future of scholarship depended upon the resuscitation of Greek studies, Petrarch initiated the four most important momenta of the classical Renaissance. He, again, was the first to understand the value of public libraries;<sup>13</sup> the first to accumulate coins and inscriptions, as the sources of accurate historical information; the first to preach the duty of preserving ancient monuments. It would seem as though, by the instinct of genius, he foresaw the future for

<sup>9</sup> See the interesting letter to Luca di Penna, *De Libris Ciceronis*, p. 946, and compare *De Ignorantiâ sui ipsius*, &c. p. 1044. These references, as well as those which follow under the general sign *Ibid.*, are made to the edition of Petrarch's collected works, Basle, 1581.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* p. 948. Cf. the fine letter on the duty of collecting and preserving codices (*Fam. Epist.* lib. iii. 18, p. 619). 'Aurum, argentum, gemmæ, purpurea vestis, marmoræ domus, cultus ager, pictæ tabulæ, phaleratus sonipes, cæteraque id genus mutam habent et superficialiam voluptatem: libri medullitis delectant, colloquuntur, consulunt, er vivâ quâdam nobis atque argutâ familiaritate junguntur.'

<sup>11</sup> *De Libris Ciceronis*, p. 949. Cf. his *Epistle to Varro* for an account of a lost MS. of that author. *Ibid.* p. 708.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* p. 948. Cf. *De Ignorantia*, pp. 1053, 1054. See, too, the letter to Nicolaus Syocerus of Constantinople, *Epist. Var.* xx. p. 998, thanking him for the Homer and the Plato, in which Petrarch gives an account of his slender Greek studies. 'Homerus tuus apud me mutus, immo vero ego apud illum surdus sum. Gaudeo tamen vel aspectu solo, et sepe illum amplexus et suspirans dico. . . . Plato philosophorum princeps . . . nunc tandem tuo munere Philosophorum principi Poetarum princeps asserit. Quis tantis non gaudeat et glorietur hospitibus? . . . Græcos spectare, et si nihil aliud, certe juvat.' The letter urging Boccaccio to translate Homer—'an tuo studio, meâ impensâ fieri possit, ut Homerus integer bibliothecæ huic, ubi pridem Græcus habitat, tandem Latinus accedat'—will be found *Ep. Rer. Sen.* lib. iii. 5, p. 775. In another letter, *Ep. Rer. Sen.* lib. vi. 2, p. 807, he thanks Boccaccio for the Latin version.

<sup>13</sup> *De Remediis utriusque Fortunæ*, p. 43. A plea for public as against private collections of useful books. 'Multos in vinculis tenes,' &c.

at least three centuries, and comprehended the highest uses whereof scholarship is capable.

So far the outside only of Petrarch's instinct for humanism has been touched. How fully he possessed its large and liberal spirit is shown by the untiring war he carried on against formalism, tradition, pedantry, and superstition. Whatever might impede the free play of the intellect aroused his bitterest hatred. Against the narrow views of scholastic theologians, against the futile preoccupations of the Middle-Age materialists, against the lawyers and physicians and astrologers in vogue, he declared inexorable hostility.<sup>14</sup> These men, by their puerilities and falsities, obstructed the natural action of the mind; therefore Petrarch attacked them. At the same time he recognised the liberators of the reason by a kind of tact. Though he could not interpret the sixteen dialogues of Plato he possessed in Greek, he perceived intuitively that Plato, as opposed to Aristotle, would become the saint of liberal philosophy, surveyed by him as in a Pisgah-view. His enthusiasm for Cicero and Virgil was twofold; in both respects he proved how capable he was of moulding the taste and directing the mental force of his successors. As an artist, he discerned in their style the harmonies of sound and the proprieties of diction, whereby Latin might once again become the language of fine thoughts and delicate emotions. As a champion of intellectual independence, he saw that, studying their large discourse of all things which the reason and imagination can appropriate, the thinkers of the modern age might shake off scholastic fetters, and enter into the inheritance of spiritual freedom. Poetry and rhetoric he regarded not merely as the fine arts of literature, but as two chief instruments whereby the man of genius arrives at self-expression, perpetuates the qualities of his own soul, and impresses his character upon the age. Since this realisation of the individual in a high and puissant work of art appeared to him the noblest aim of man on earth, it followed that the inspired speech of the poet and the eloquence of the orator became for Petrarch the summit of ambition, the two-peaked Parnassus he struggled through his lifetime to ascend.<sup>15</sup> The ideal was literary; but literature implied for Petrarch more than words and phrases. It was not enough to make melodious verse, or to move an audience with well-sounding periods. The hexameters of the epic and the paragraphs of

<sup>14</sup> See the four books of *Invectives*, *Contra Medicum quendam*, and the treatise *De sui ipsius et aliorum Ignorantiâ*. Page 1038 of the last dissertation contains a curious list of frivolous questions discussed by the Averrhoists. Cf. the letter on the decadence of true learning, *Ep. Var.* 31, p. 1020; the letter to a friend exhorting him to combat Averrhoism, *Epist. sine titulo*, 18, p. 731; two letters on physicians *Epist. Rerum Senilium*, lib. xii. 1 and 2, pp. 897-914; a letter to Francesco Bruno on the lies of the astrologers, *Epist. Rer. Sen.* lib. i. 6, p. 747; a letter to Boccaccio on the same theme, *Epist. Rer. Sen.* lib. iii. 1, p. 765; another on physicians to Boccaccio, *Epist. Rer. Sen.* lib. v. 4, p. 796. Cf. the Critique of Alchemy, *De Remediis utriusque Fortunæ*, p. 93.

<sup>15</sup> In comparing the orator and the poet, Petrarch gives the palm to the former. He thought the perfect rhetorician, capable of expressing sound philosophy with clearness, was rarer than the poet. See *De Remediis utriusque Fortunæ*, lib. ii. dial. 102, p. 192.

the oration had to contain solid thought, to be the genuine outcome of the poet's or the rhetorician's soul. The writer was bound to be a preacher, to discover truth, and make the truths he found agreeable to the world.<sup>16</sup> His life, moreover, ought to be in perfect harmony with all he sought to teach.<sup>17</sup> Upon the purity of his enthusiasm, the sincerity of his inspiration, depended the future well-being of the world for which he laboured.<sup>18</sup> Thus for this one man at least the art of letters was a priesthood; and the earnestness of his vocation made him fit to be the master of succeeding ages. It is not easy for us to appreciate the boldness and sincerity of these conceptions. Many of them, since the days of Petrarch, have been overstrained and made ridiculous by false pretensions. Besides, the whole point of view has been appropriated; and men invariably undervalue what they feel they cannot lose. It is only by comparing Petrarch's own philosophy of literature with the dullness of the schoolmen in their decadence, and with the stylistic shallowness of subsequent scholars, that we come to comprehend how luminous and novel was the thesis he supported.

Having thus conceived of literature, Petrarch obtained a standard for estimating the barren culture of his century. He taxed the disputations of the doctors with lifeless repetition and unmeaning verbiage. Schoolman after schoolman had been occupied with formal trifles. The erudition of the jurist and the theologian revealed nothing fruitful for the heart or intellect; and everything was valueless that did not come straight from a man's soul, speaking to the soul of one who heard him. At the same time he read the Fathers and the Scriptures in a new light. Augustine, some few of whose sentences had been used as links in the catena of dogmatic orthodoxy, seemed to Petrarch no longer a mere master of theology, but a man conversing with him across the chasm of eight centuries. In the 'Confessions,' 'running over with a fount of tears,' the poet of Vacluse divined a kindred nature; one who used exalted eloquence for the expression of vital thoughts and passionate emotions; one, moreover, who had reached the height of human happiness in union with God.<sup>19</sup> Not less real was the grasp he laid upon the prophets and apostles of the Bible. All words that bore a message to his heart were words of authority and power. The *ipse dixit* of an Aristotle or a Seraphic doctor had for him no weight, unless it came

<sup>16</sup> See, among other passages, *Ino. contra Medicum*, lib. i. p. 1092. 'Poetæ studium est veritatem veram pulchris velaminibus adornare.' Cf. p. 905, the paragraph beginning 'Officium est ejus fingere,' &c.

<sup>17</sup> See the preface to the *Epistolæ Familiares*, p. 570. 'Scribendi enim mihi vivendique unus (ut auguror) finis erit.'

<sup>18</sup> For his lofty conception of poetry see the two letters to Boccaccio and Benvenuto da Imola, pp. 740, 941. *Epist. Rerum Senilium*, lib. i. 4, lib. xiv. 11.

<sup>19</sup> The references to Augustine as a 'divine genius,' equal to Cicero in eloquence, superior to the classics in his knowledge of Christ, are too frequent for citation. See, however, *Fam. Epist.* lib. ii. 9, p. 601; the letter to Boccaccio, *Variarum*, 22. p. 1001; and *Fam. Epist.* lib. iv. 9, p. 635. The phrase describing the *Confessions*, quoted in my text, is from Petrarch's letter to his brother Gerard, *Epist. Var.* 27, p. 1012, 'Scatentes lachrymis Confessionum libros.'



home to him as a man.<sup>20</sup> Even Cicero and Seneca, the saints of philosophical antiquity, he dared to criticise for practising less wisdom than they preached.<sup>21</sup>

While regarding Petrarch as the first and, in some respects, the greatest of the humanists, we are bound to recognise the faults as well as the good qualities he shared with them. To dwell on these in detail would be a thankless task, were it not for the conviction that his personality impressed itself too strongly on the fourteenth century to escape our criticism. We cannot afford to leave even the foibles of the man who gave a pattern to his generation unstudied. Foremost among these may be reckoned his vanity, his eagerness to grasp the poet's crown, his appetite for flattery, his restless change from place to place in search of new admirers, his self-complacent garrulity. This vanity was perhaps inseparable from the position he assumed upon the threshold of the modern world. It was hardly possible that the prophet of a new phase of culture should not look down with contempt upon the uneducated masses, and believe that learning raised a man into a demigod. Study of the classics taught him to despise his age and yearn for immortality; but the assurance of the honours that he sought, could only come to him upon the lips of his contemporaries. In conflict with the dulness and the darkness of preceding centuries, he felt the need of a new motive, unrecognised by the Church and banished from the cloister. That motive was the thirst for fame, the craving to make his personality eternal in the minds of men. Meanwhile he was alone in a dim wilderness of transitory interests and sordid aims, where human life was shadowy, and where, when death arrived, there would remain no memory of what had been. The gloom of this present in contrast with the glory of the past he studied, and the glory of the future he desired, confirmed his egotism. His name and fame depended on his self-assertion. To achieve renown by writing, to wrest for himself even in his lifetime a firm place among the immortals, became his feverish spur to action. He was conscious how deep a hold the passion for celebrity had taken on his nature; and not unfrequently he speaks of it as a disease.<sup>22</sup> The Christian within him wrestled vigorously with the renascent Pagan. Religion taught him to renounce what ambition prompted him to grasp. Yet he continued to deceive himself. While penning dissertations on the worthlessness of praise and the futility of fame, he trimmed his sails to catch the breeze of popular applause; and as his reputation widened, his desires grew ever stronger. The last years of his life were spent in writing epistles to the great men of the past, in whom alone he recognised his equals, and to posterity, in whom he hoped to meet at last with judges worthy of him.

<sup>20</sup> 'Sum sectarum negligens, veri appetens.' *Epist. Rer. Sen.* lib. i. 5, p. 745. 'Nam apud Horatium Flaccum, nullius jurare in verba magistri, puer valde didiceram.' *Epist. Fam.* lib. iv. 10, p. 637.

<sup>21</sup> See the letters addressed to Cicero and Seneca, pp. 705, 706.

<sup>22</sup> 'Egritudo' is a phrase that constantly recurs in his epistles to indicate a restless, craving habit of the soul. See, too, the whole second book of the *De Contemptu Mundi*.

This almost morbid vanity, peculiar to Petrarch's temperament and encouraged by the circumstances of his life, introduced a division between his practice and his profession. He was never tired of praising solitude, and many years of his manhood he spent in actual retirement at Vauclose.<sup>23</sup> Yet he only loved seclusion as a contrast to the society of Courts, and would have been most miserable if the world, taking him at his own estimate, had left him in peace. No one wrote more eloquently about equal friendship, or professed a stronger zeal for candid criticism. Yet he admitted few but professed admirers to his intimacy, and regarded his literary antagonists as personal detractors. The same sensitive egotism led him to depreciate the fame of Dante, in whom he cannot but have recognised a poet in the highest sense superior to himself.<sup>24</sup> Again, while he complained of celebrity as an obstacle to studious employment, he showed the most acute interest when the details of his life were called in question.<sup>25</sup> Nothing, if we took his philosophic treatises for record, would have pleased him better than to live unnoticed. His letters make it manifest that he believed the eyes of the whole world were fixed upon him, and that he courted this attention of the public with a greedy appetite.

These qualities and contradictions mark Petrarch as a man of letters, not of action. He belonged essentially to the *genus irritabile vatum*, for whom the sphere of thoughts expressed on paper is more vivid than the world of facts. We may trace a corresponding weakness in his chief enthusiasms. Unable to distinguish between the realities of existence and the dreamland of his study, he hailed in Rienzi the restorer of old Rome, while he stigmatised his friends the Colonnaesi as barbarian intruders.<sup>26</sup> The Rome he read of in the pages of Livy seemed to the imagination of this visionary still alive and powerful; nor did he feel the absurdity of addressing the mediæval rabble of the Romans in phrases high-flown for a Gracchus.<sup>27</sup> While he courted the intimacy of the Correggi, and lived as a house-guest with the Visconti, he denounced these princes as tyrants, and appealed to the Emperor to take the reins and bring all Italy beneath his yoke.<sup>28</sup> Herein, it may be urged, Petrarch did but share a delusion common to his age. This is true; but the point to notice is the contradiction between his theories and the habits of his life. He was not a partisan on the Ghibelline

<sup>23</sup> See the treatise *De Vitâ Solitariâ*, pp. 223-292, and the letters on 'Vauclose,' pp. 691-697.

<sup>24</sup> See the discussion of this point in Baldelli's *Vita del Boccaccio*, pp. 130-135.

<sup>25</sup> Compare the chapter in the dissertation *De Remediis* on troublesome notoriety, p. 177, with the letter on his reception at Arezzo, p. 918, the letter to Nerius Morandus on the false news of his death, p. 776, and the letter to Boccaccio on his detractors, p. 749.

<sup>26</sup> See the *Epistles to Rienzi*, pp. 677, 535.

<sup>27</sup> Epistle to the Roman people, beginning 'Apud te invictissime domitorque terrarum popule meus,' p. 712.

<sup>28</sup> Epistle to Charles IV., *De Pacificanda Italiâ*, p. 531. This contradiction struck even his most ardent admirers with painful surprise. See Boccaccio quoted in Baldelli's *Life*, p. 115.

side, but a believer in impossible ideals. His patriotism was no less literary than his temperament. The same tendency to measure all things by a student's standard made him exaggerate mere verbal eloquence. Words, according to his view, were power. Cicero held the highest place in his esteem, because his declamation was most copious. Aristotle, in spite of his profound philosophy, was censured for his lack of rhetoric.<sup>29</sup> Throughout the studied works of Petrarch we can trace this vice of a stylistic ideal. Though he never writes without one solid germ of thought, he loves to play with phrases, producing an effect of unreality, and seeming emulous of casuistical adroitness.<sup>30</sup>

The foregoing analysis was necessary because Petrarch became, as it were, a model for his followers in the field of scholarship. Italian humanism never lost the powerful impress of his genius, and the value of his influence can only be appreciated when the time arrives for summing up the total achievement of the Revival.<sup>31</sup> It remains to be regretted that the weaknesses of his character, his personal pretension and literary idealism, were more easily imitated than his strength. Petrarch's egotism differed widely from the insolent conceit of Filelfo and the pedantic boasts of Alciato. Nor did his enthusiasm for antiquity degenerate, like theirs, into a mere uncritical and servile worship. His humanism was both loftier and larger. He never forgot that Christianity was an advance upon Paganism, and that the accomplished man of letters must acquire the culture of the ancients without losing the virtues or sacrificing the hopes of a Christian. If only the humanists of the Renaissance could have preserved this point of view intact, they would have avoided the worst evils of the age, and have secured a nobler liberation of the modern reason. Petrarch created for himself a creed compounded of Roman Stoicism and Christian doctrine, adapting the precepts of the Gospels and the teaching of the Fathers, together with the ethics of Cicero and Seneca, to his own needs. Herein he showed the freedom of his genius, and led the way for the most brilliant thinkers of the coming centuries. The fault of his successors was a tendency to recede from this high vantage-ground, to accept the customary creed with cynical facility, while they inclined in secret to a laxity adopted from their study of the classics. By separating himself from tradition, without displaying an arrogant spirit of revolt against authority, Petrarch established the principle that men must guide their own souls by the double lights of culture and of conscience. His followers were too ready to make culture all in all, and lost thereby the opportunity of grounding a rational philosophy of life upon a solid basis for the modern world. Petrarch made it his sincere aim to be both morally and intellectually his highest self; and if he often failed

<sup>29</sup> *Rerum memorandarum*, lib. ii. p. 415.

<sup>30</sup> This is particularly noticeable in the miscellaneous collection of essays called *De Remediis utriusque Fortune*, where opposite views on a wide variety of topics are expressed with great dexterity.

<sup>31</sup> See the last chapter of this volume.

in practice—if he succumbed to carnal frailty while he praised sobriety—if he sought for notoriety while professing indifference to fame—if he mistook dreams for realities and words for facts—still the ideal he proposed to himself and eloquently preached to his contemporaries was a new and lofty one. After the lapse of five centuries, few as yet have passed beyond it. Even Goethe, for example, can claim no superiority of humanism above Petrarch, except by right of his participation in the scientific spirit.

We are therefore justified in hailing Petrarch as the Columbus of a new spiritual hemisphere, the discoverer of modern culture. That he knew no Greek, that his Latin verse was lifeless and his prose style far from pure, that his contributions to history and ethics have been superseded, and that his epistles are now only read by antiquaries, cannot impair his claim to this title. From him the inspiration needed to quicken curiosity and stimulate a zeal for knowledge proceeded. But for his intervention in the fourteenth century, it is possible that the Revival of Learning, and all that it implies, might have been delayed until too late. Petrarch died in 1374. The Greek Empire was destroyed in 1453. Between those dates Italy recovered the Greek classics; but whether the Italians would have undertaken this labour if no Petrarch had preached the attractiveness of liberal studies, or if no school of disciples had been formed by him in Florence, remains more than doubtful. We are brought thus to recognise in him one of those heroes concerning whose relation to the spirit of the ages Hegel has discoursed in his 'Philosophy of History.' Petrarch, by anticipating the tendencies of the Revival, created the intellectual milieu required for its evolution.<sup>32</sup> Yet we are not therefore justified in saying that he was not himself the product of already existing spiritual forces in his century. The vast influence he immediately exercised, while Dante, though gifted with a far more powerful individuality, remained comparatively inoperative, proves that the age was specially prepared to receive his inspiration.

What remains to be said about the first period of Italian humanism is almost wholly concerned with men who either immediately or indirectly felt the influence of Petrarch's genius.<sup>33</sup> His shadow stretches over the whole age. Incited by his brilliant renown, Boccaccio, while still a young man, began to read the classical authors, bemoaning the years he had wasted in commerce and the study of the law to please his father. From what the poet of the 'Decameron' has himself told us about the origin of his literary enthusiasm, it appears that Petrarch's example was decisive in determining his course. There is, however, another tale, reported by his fellow-citizen Villani, so characteristic of the

<sup>32</sup> The lines from the *Africa* used as a motto for this volume are a prophecy of the Renaissance.

<sup>33</sup> It is very significant of Petrarch's influence that his contemporaries ranked him higher, even as a sonnet-writer, than Dante. See *Coluccio de' Salutati's Letters*, part ii. p. 57.

age that to omit it in this place would be to sacrifice one of the most attractive legends in the history of literature.<sup>34</sup> 'After wandering through many lands, now here, now there, for a long space of time, when he had reached at last his twenty-eighth year, Boccaccio, at his father's bidding, took up his abode at Naples in the Pergola. There it chanced one day that he walked forth alone for pleasure, and came to the place where Virgil's dust lies buried. At the sight of this sepulchre, he fell into long musing admiration of the man whose bones it covered, brooding with meditative soul upon the poet's fame, until his thoughts found vent in lamentations over his own envious fortunes, whereby he was compelled against his will to give himself to things of commerce that he loathed. A sudden love of the Pierian Muses smote his heart, and turning homeward, he abandoned trade, devoting himself with fervent study to poetry; wherein very shortly, aided alike by his noble genius and his burning desire, he made marvellous progress. This when his father noted, and perceived the heavenly inspiration was more powerful within his son than the paternal will, he at last consented to his studies, and helped him as best he could, although at first he tried to make him turn his talents to the canon law.'

The hero-worship of Boccaccio, not only for the august Virgil, but also for Dante, the master of his youth and the idol of his mature age, is the most amiable trait in a character which, by its geniality and sweetness, cannot fail to win affection.<sup>35</sup> When circumstances brought him into personal relations with Petrarch, he transferred the whole homage of his ardent soul to the only man alive who seemed to him a fit inheritor of ancient fame.<sup>36</sup> Petrarch became the director of his conscience, the master of his studies, the moulder of his thoughts upon the weightiest matters of literary philosophy. The friendship established between the poet of Vaucluse and the lover of Fiammetta lasted through more than twenty years, and was only broken by the death of the former. Throughout this long space of time Boccaccio retained the attitude of a humble scholar, while in his published works, the 'Genealogia Deorum' and the 'Comento sopra i Primi Sedici Capitoli dell' "Inferno" di Dante,' he uniformly spoke of Petrarch as his father and his teacher, the wonder of the century, a heavenly poet better fitted to be numbered with the giants of the past than with the pygmies of a barren age. The fame enjoyed by Petrarch, the honours showered upon him by kings and princes, his own vanity, and even the discrepancies between his habits and his theories, produced no bitterness in

<sup>34</sup> Filippo Villani, *Vite d' Uomini Illustri Fiorentini*, Firenze, 1826, p. 9.

<sup>35</sup> With his own hand Boccaccio transcribed the *Divine Comedy*, and sent the MS. to Petrarch, who in his reply wrote thus:—'Inseris nominatim hanc hujus officii tui escusationem, quod tibi adolescentulo primus studiorum dux, prima fax fuerit.' Baldelli, p. 133. The enthusiasm of Boccaccio for Dante contrasts favourably with Petrarch's grudging egotism.

<sup>36</sup> Boccaccio was present at Naples when Petrarch disputed before King Robert for his title to the poet's crown (*Gen. Deor.* xiv. 22); but he first became intimate with him as a friend during Petrarch's visit to Florence in 1350.

Boccaccio's more modest nature. It was enough for the pupil to use his talents for the propagation of his master's views; and thus the influence of Petrarch was communicated to Florence, where Boccaccio continued to reside.<sup>37</sup>

In obedience to Petrarch's advice, Boccaccio in middle life applied himself to learning Greek. Petrarch had never acquired a real knowledge of the language, though he received a few lessons at Avignon from Barlaam, a Calabrian, who had settled in Byzantium, and who sought to advance his fortunes in Italy and Greece by alternate acts of apostasy, and afterwards at Venice from Leontius Pilatus.<sup>38</sup> The opportunities of Greek study enjoyed by Boccaccio were also very meagre, and his mastery of the idiom was superficial. Yet he advanced considerably beyond the point reached by any of his predecessors, so that he deserves to be named as the first Grecian of the modern world. Leontius Pilatus, a Southern Italian and a pupil of Barlaam, who, like his teacher, had removed to Byzantium and renounced the Latin faith, arrived at Venice on his way to Avignon in 1360. Boccaccio induced him to visit Florence, received him into his own house, and caused him to be appointed Greek Professor in the University. Then he set himself to work in earnest on the text of Homer. The ignorance of the teacher was, however, scarcely less than that of his pupil. While Leontius possessed a fair knowledge of Byzantine Greek, his command of Latin was very limited, and his natural stupidity was only equalled by his impudent pretensions. Of classical usages he seems to have known nothing. The imbecility of his master could scarcely have escaped the notice of Boccaccio. Indeed, both he and Petrarch have described Leontius as a sordid cynic with a filthy beard and tangled hair, morose in his temper and disgusting in his personal habits, who concealed a bovine ignorance beneath a lion's hide of ostentation. It was, however, necessary to make the best of him; for Greek in Northern Italy could nowhere else be gained, and Boccaccio had not thought, it seems, of journeying to Byzantium in search of what he wanted.<sup>39</sup> Boccaccio, accordingly, drank the muddy stream of pseudo-learning and lies that flowed from this man's lips, with insatiable avidity. The nonsense administered to him by way of satisfying his thirst for knowledge may best be understood from the following etymologies. Ἀχιλλεύς was

<sup>37</sup> Salutato, writing to Francesco da Brossano, describes his conversations with Boccaccio thus:—'Nihil aliud quam de Francisco (i.e. Petrarcha) conferebamus. In cuius laudationem adeo libenter sermones usurpabat, ut nihil avidius nihilque copiosius enarraret. Et eo magis quia tali orationis generi me prospiciebat intentum. Sufficiebat enim nobis Petrarcha solus, et omni posteritati sufficere in moralitate sermonis, in eloquentiæ soliditate atque dulcedine, in lepore prosarum et in concinnitate metrorum.' *Epist. Fam.* p. 45.

<sup>38</sup> *Epist. Rer. Sen.*, lib. xi. 9, p. 887; lib. vi. 1, p. 806; lib. v. 4, p. 801.

<sup>39</sup> Petrarch's letter to Ugone di San Severino, *Epist. Rer. Sen.* lib. xi. 9, p. 887, deserves to be read, since it proves that Italian scholars despaired at this time of gaining Greek learning from Constantinople. They were rather inclined to seek it in Calabria. 'Græciam, ut olim ditissimam, sic nunc omnis longe inopem disciplinæ . . . quod desperat apud Græcos, non diffidit apud Calabros inveniri posse.'

derived from ἀ and χιλος, 'without fodder.'<sup>40</sup> The names of the Muses gave rise to these extraordinary explanations: <sup>41</sup>—Melpomene is derived from *Melempio comene*, which signifies *jacente stare la meditazione*; Thalia is the same as *Tithonlia* or *pognente cosa che germi*; Polyhymnia, through *Polium neemen*, is the same as *cosa che faccia molta memoria*; Erato becomes *Euruncomenon* or *trovatore del simile*, and Terpsichore is described as *dilettante ammaestramento*.

Such was the bathos reached by erudition in Byzantium. Yet Boccaccio made what use he could of his contemptible materials. At the dictation of Leontius he wrote out the 'Iliad' and 'Odyssey' in Latin; and this was the first translation made of Homer for modern readers. The manuscript despatched to Petrarch, was, as we have seen already, greeted with enthusiasm.<sup>42</sup> This moment in the history of scholarship is so memorable that I may be excused for borrowing Baldelli's extract from an ancient copy of Boccaccio's autograph.<sup>43</sup> Lycaon addresses his last prayer to Achilles:—

Genu deprecor te Achilles: tu autem venerare et me miserere.  
Vada Servus. Jove genite venerabilis.  
Penes enim te primo gustavi Cereris farinam,  
Die illo, quando me cepisti in bene facto viridario;  
Et me transtulisti procul ferens patreque amicisque  
Lemnon ad gloriosam. Hecatombium autem honorem inveni,  
Nunc autem læsus ter tot ferens. Dies autem mihi est  
Hæc duodecima, quando ad Ilion veni  
Multa passus. Nunc iterum me in tuis manibus posuit  
Fatum destructibile. Debeo odio esse Jovi patri,  
Qui me tibi iterum dedit, medio cuique, me mater  
Genuit Lathoi, filia Altaï senis.

Only by keeping firmly in mind that such men as Petrarch and Boccaccio, the two chief masters of Italian literature, prized this wretched stuff as an inestimable treasure, can we justly conceive how utterly Greek had been lost, and what an effort it required to restore it to the modern world.

Indefatigable industry was Boccaccio's great merit as a student. He transcribed the whole of Terence with his own hands, and showed a real sense of the advantage to be gained by a critical comparison of texts. In his mythological, geographical, and historical collections he bequeathed to posterity a curious mass of miscellaneous knowledge, forming, as it were, the first dictionaries of biography and antiquity

<sup>40</sup> *De Gen. Deor.* xv. 6, 7.

<sup>41</sup> *Comento sopra Dante, Opp. Volg.* vol. x. p. 127. After allowing for the difficulty of writing Greek, pronounced by an Italian, in Italian letters, and also for the errors of the copyist and printer, it is clear that a Greek scholar who thought Melpomene was one 'who gives fixity to meditation,' Thalia one 'who plants the capacity of growth,' Polyhymnia she 'who strengthens and expands memory,' Erato 'the discoverer of similarity,' and Terpsichore 'delightful instruction,' was on a comically wrong track.

<sup>42</sup> See above, p. 363, note 12.

<sup>43</sup> *Vita del Boccaccio*, p. 264. The autograph was probably burned with other books of Boccaccio, and some of the unintelligible passages in the above quotation may be due to the ignorance of the copyist.



for modern scholars.<sup>44</sup> Far from sharing the originality of Petrarch's humanistic ideal, he remained at best a laborious chronicler of facts and anecdotes. The author of the 'Decameron,' so richly gifted with humour, pathos, and poetic fancy, when he wrapped his student's robe around him, became a painstaking pioneer of antiquarian research.

One very important part of Petrarch's programme was eloquently supported by Boccaccio. The fourteenth and fifteenth books of the 'Genealogia Deorum' form what may be termed the first defence of poesy, composed in honour of his own art by a poet of the modern world. In them Boccaccio expounds a theory already sketched in outline by Petrarch. We have seen that the worst obstacle to humanistic culture lay, not so much in ignorance, as in misconceptions based upon prejudice and scruple. The notion of fine literature as an elevating and purifying influence had been lost. To restore it was the object of these earliest humanists. By poetry, contends Boccaccio, we must understand whatever of weighty in argument, deep in doctrine, and vivid in imagination the man of genius may produce with conscious art in prose and verse. Poetry is instruction conveyed through allegory and fiction. Theology itself, he reasons, is a form of poetry; even the Holy Ghost may be called a Poet, inasmuch as He used the vehicle of symbol in the visions of the prophets and the Revelation of S. John.<sup>45</sup> To such strained arguments was the apostle of culture driven in order to persuade his hearers, and to drag literature from the Avernus of mediæval neglect. We must not, however, imagine that Boccaccio was himself superior to a point of view so puerile. Allegory appeared to him a necessary condition of art: only a madman could deny the hidden meaning of the 'Georgics' and the 'Æneid';<sup>46</sup> while the verses of Dante and of Petrarch owed their value to the Christian mysteries they shrouded. The poet, according to this mediæval philosophy of literature, was a sage and teacher wrapping up his august meanings in delightful fictions.<sup>47</sup> Though the common herd despised him as a liar and a falsehood-fabricator, he was, in truth, a prophet uttering his dark speech in parables. How foolish, therefore, reasons the apologist, are the enemies of poetry—sophistical dialecticians and avaricious jurists, who have never trodden the Phœbean hill, and who scorn the springs of Helicon because they do not flow with gold! Far worse is the condition of those monks and hypocrites who accuse the divine art of immorality and grossness, instead of reading between the lines and

<sup>44</sup> *De Genealogiâ Deorum; De Casibus Virorum ac Feminarum Illustrium; De Claris Muliebribus; De Montibus, Silvis, Fontibus, &c.*

<sup>45</sup> 'La teologia e la poesia quasi una cosa si possono dire . . . la teologia niuna altra cosa è che una poesia d' Iddio.' *Vita di Dante*, p. 59. Cf. *Comento sopra Dante*, loc. cit. p. 45. The explanation of the Muses referred to above is governed by the same determination to find philosophy in poetry.

<sup>46</sup> See Petrarch's letter 'De quibusdam fictionibus Virgilii.' *Ep. Rer. Sen. lib. iv. 4*, p. 785.

<sup>47</sup> See the privilege granted to Petrarch by the Roman senator in 1343, *Petr. Opp.* tom. iii. p. 6.

seeking the sense conveyed to the understanding under veils of allegory. Truly, proceeds Boccaccio, we do well to shun the errors of Pagans; nor can it be denied that poets of antiquity have written verse abhorrent to the Christian spirit. But, Jesus Christ be praised, the faith has triumphed. Strong in the doctrines of the Gospel and the Church, the student may safely approach the masterpieces of classic literature without fearing the seductions of the Siren.

This argument, forming the gist of the 'Apology for Poetry' in the 'Genealogia Deorum,' is repeated in the 'Comment upon Dante.' It is doubly interesting, both as showing the popular opinion of poetry and the prejudices Boccaccio thought it needful to attack, and also as containing a full exposition of the allegorising theories with which humanism started. For some time after Boccaccio's death the paragraphs condensed above supplied the champions of culture with weapons to be used against their ecclesiastical and scholastic antagonists; nor was it until humanism had triumphed, that the allegorical interpretation of the ancients was finally abandoned.

Independently of his contributions to learning, Boccaccio occupies a prominent place in the history of the Revival through the new spirit he introduced into the vulgar literature. He was the first who frankly sought to justify the pleasures of carnal life, whose temperament, unburdened by asceticism, found a congenial element in amorous legends of antiquity. The romances of Boccaccio, with their beautiful gardens and sunny skies, fair women and luxurious lovers, formed a transition from the chivalry of the early Italian poets to the sensuality of Beccadelli and Pontano. He prepared the nation for literary and artistic Paganism by unconsciously divesting thought and feeling of their spiritual elevation. Dante had made the whole world one in Christ. Petrarch put humanity to school in the lecture-room of Roman sages and in the councils of the Church. A terrestrial paradise of sensual delight, where all things were desirable and delicate, contented the poet of the 'Fiammetta' and 'Filostrato.' To the beatific vision of the 'Divine Comedy,' to the 'Trionfo della Morte,' succeeded the 'Visione Amorosa'—a review of human life, in which Boccaccio begins by invoking Dame Venus and ends with earthly love, *Il Sior di tutta pace*.

The name given to Boccaccio by contemporaries, *Giovanni della Tranquillità*, sufficiently indicates his peaceful temperament. He was, in fact, the scholar, working in his study, and contributing to the erudition of his age by writings. Another of Petrarch's disciples, Giovanni Malpaghino, called from his birthplace Giovanni da Ravenna, exercised a more active personal influence over the destinies of scholarship. While still a youth he had been employed by Petrarch as secretary and amanuensis. His general ability, clear handwriting, and enthusiasm for learning first recommended him to the poet, who made use of him for copying manuscripts and arranging his familiar letters. In the course of this work John of Ravenna became himself a learned man, acquiring a finer sense of Latinity than was possessed by any other

scholar of his time. Something, too, of the sacred fire he caught from Petrarch, so that in his manhood the very faults of his nature became instrumental in diffusing throughout Italy the passion for antiquity. He could not long content himself with being even Petrarch's scribe. Irresistible restlessness impelled him to seek adventures in the outer world, to mix with men and gain the glory he was always reading of. Petrarch, incapable of comprehending that any honour was greater than that of being his satellite, treated this ambitious pupil like a wilful child. A quarrel ensued. Giovanni left his benefactor's house and went forth to try his fortunes. Without repeating the vicissitudes of his career in detail, it is enough to mention that want and misery soon drove him back to Petrarch; that once more the vagrant impulse came upon him, and that for a season he filled the post of chancellor in the little principality of Carrara.<sup>48</sup> The one thing, however, which he could not endure, was the routine of fixed employment. Therefore we find that he abandoned the Court of the Malaspini, and betook himself to the more congenial work of a wandering professor. His prodigious memory, by enabling him to retain, word for word, the text of authors he had read, proved of invaluable service to him in this career. His passionate poetic temper made him apt to raise enthusiasm in young souls for literary studies. Giovanni da Ravenna was in fact the first of those vagabond humanists with whom we shall be occupied in the next chapters, and of whom Filelfo was the most illustrious example. Florence, Padua, Venice, and many other cities of Italy received the Latinist, whose reputation now increased with every year. In each of these towns in succession he lectured upon Cicero and the Roman poets, pouring forth the knowledge he had acquired in Petrarch's study, and transmitting to his audience the inspiration he had received from his master. The school thus formed was compared a century later to the Trojan horse, whence issued a band of heroes destined to possess the capital of classic learning. As a writer, he produced little that is worth more than a passing notice. His real merit consisted, as Lionardo Bruni witnessed, in his faculty of arousing a passion for pure literature, and especially for the study of Cicero. Among his most illustrious pupils may be mentioned Francesco Barbaro, Palla degli Strozzi, Roberto de' Rossi, Francesco Filelfo, Carlo Marsuppini, Poggio Bracciolini, Lionardo Bruni, Guarino da Verona, Vittorino da Feltre, Ambrogio Traversari, Ognibene da Vincenza, and Pier Paolo Vergerio. This list, as will appear from the sequel of my work, includes nearly all those scholars who devoted their energies to erudition at Venice, Florence, Rome, Mantua, Ferrara, and Perugia in the fifteenth century. Giovanni da Ravenna deserves, therefore, to be honoured as the link between the age of Petrarch and the age of Poggio, as the vessel chosen for communicating the sacred fire of humanism to the Courts and Republics of

<sup>48</sup> De Sade, in his *Memoirs of Petrarch*, gives an interesting account of this romantic episode in his life. See too Petrarch, *Epist. Rer. Sen.* lib. v. 6 and 7, pp. 802-806.

Italy. None but a wanderer, *vagus quidam*, as Petrarch, half in scorn and half in sorrow, called his protégé, could so effectually have carried on the work of propagation.<sup>49</sup>

The name of the next student claiming our attention as a disciple of Petrarch, brings us once more back to Florence. Luigi Marsigli was a monk of the Augustine Order of S. Spirito. Petrarch, noticing his distinguished abilities, had exhorted him to make a special study of theology, and to enter the lists as a champion of Christianity against the Averrhoists.<sup>50</sup> Under the name of Averrhoists in the fourteenth century were ranged all freethinkers who questioned the fundamental doctrines of the Church, doubted the immortality of the soul, and employed their ingenuity in a dialectic at least as trivial as that of the schoolmen, but directed to a very different end.<sup>51</sup> Petrarch disliked their want of liberal culture as much as he abhorred their affectation of impiety. The stupid materialism they professed, their gross flippancy, and the idle pretence of natural science upon which they piqued themselves, were regarded by him as so many obstacles to his own ideal of humanism. He only saw in them another set of scholastic wranglers, worse than the theologians, inasmuch as they had cast off Christ. Against Averrhoes, 'the raging hound who barked at all things sacred and Divine,' Petrarch therefore sought to stimulate the young Marsigli. Marsigli, however, while he shared Petrarch's respect for humane culture, seems to have sympathised with the audacity and freedom of his proposed antagonists. The Convent of S. Spirito became under his influence the centre of a learned society, who met there regularly for disquisitions. The theme chosen for discussion was posted up upon the wall of the debating-room, metaphysical and ethical subjects forming the most frequent matter of inquiry.<sup>52</sup> Among the members of the circle who sharpened their wits in this species of dialectic, we find Coluccio de' Salutati, Roberto de' Rossi, Nicollo de' Niccoli, and Giannozzo Manetti. The influence of Marsigli in forming their character was undoubtedly powerful. Poggio, in his funeral oration upon Niccolo de' Niccoli, tells us that 'the house of Marsigli was frequented by distinguished youths, who set themselves to imitate his life and habits; it was, moreover, the resort of the best and noblest burghers of this city, who flowed together from all quarters to him as to some oracle of more than human wisdom.'<sup>53</sup> His intellectual acuteness, solid erudition, and winning eloquence were displayed in moral disquisitions upon Virgil, Cicero, and Seneca. In this way he had the merit of combining the dialectic method and the bold spirit of the Averrhoists with the sound learning and polite culture of the newly-discovered human-

<sup>49</sup> *Epist. Rer. Sen. lib. xiv. 14, p. 942.*

<sup>50</sup> *Epist. sine titulo, xviii. p. 732.*

<sup>51</sup> See the exhaustive work of Renan, *Averroès et l'Averroïsme.*

<sup>52</sup> See Manetti's *Life*, Mur. xx. col. 531. Other references will be found in Vespasiano's *Lives*. Boccaccio's library was preserved in this convent.

<sup>53</sup> *Poggii Opera, p. 271.*

ities. The Convent of S. Spirito has to be mentioned as the first of those many private academies to which the free thought and the scholarship of Italy were afterwards destined to owe so much.

It is my object in this chapter to show how humanistic scholarship, starting from Petrarch, penetrated every department of study, and began to permeate the intellectual life of the Italians. We have now to notice its intrusion into the sphere of politics. Petrarch died in 1374, Boccaccio in 1375. The latter date is also that of Coluccio de' Salutati's entrance upon the duties of Florentine Chancellor. Salutato, the friend of Boccaccio and the disciple of Marsigli, the professed worshipper of Petrarch and the translator of Dante into Latin verse, was destined to exercise an important influence in his own department as a stylist. Before he was called to act as secretary to the Signory of Florence in his forty-sixth year, he had already acquired the learning and imbibed the spirit of his age. He was known as a diligent collector of manuscripts and promoter of Greek studies, as a writer on mythology and morals, as an orator and miscellaneous author.<sup>54</sup> His talents had now to be concentrated on the weightier business of the Florentine Republic; but his study of antiquity caused him to conceive his duties and political relations of the State he served in a new light. During the wars carried on with Gregory XI. and the Visconti, his pen was never idle. For the first time he introduced into public documents the gravity of style and melody of phrase he had learned in the school of classic rhetoricians. The effect produced by this literary statesman, as elegant in authorship as he was subtle in the conduct of affairs, can only be estimated at its proper value when we remember that the Italians were now ripe to receive the influence of rhetoric, and only too ready to attribute weight to verbal ingenuity. Gian Galeazzo Visconti is said to have declared that Salutato had done him more harm by his style than a troop of paid mercenaries.<sup>55</sup> The epistles, despatches, protocols, and manifestoes composed by their Chancellor for the Florentine priors, were distributed throughout Italy. Read and copied by the secretaries of other states, they formed the models of a new State eloquence.<sup>56</sup> Elegant Latinity became a necessary condition

<sup>54</sup> Salutato's familiar letters, *Lini Coluci Pieri Salutati Epistolarum Pars Secunda, Florentiae*, MDCCXXXI., are a valuable source of information respecting scholarship at the close of the fourteenth century. See especially his letter to Benvenuto da Imola on the death of Petrarch (p. 32), his letter to the same about Petrarch's *Africa* (p. 41), another letter about the preservation of the *Africa* (p. 79), a letter to Petrarch's nephew Francesco da Brossano on the death of Boccaccio (p. 44), and a letter to a certain Comes Magnus on the literary and philosophical genius of Petrarch (p. 49).

<sup>55</sup> 'Galeacius Mediolanensium Princeps crebro auditus est dicere non tam sibi mille Florentinorum equites quam Colucii scripta nocere.' *Pii Secundi Europæ Commentarii*,

p. 454.

<sup>56</sup> 'Costui fu de' migliori dittatori di pistole al mondo, perocchè molti quando ne potevano avere, ne toglieano copie; sì piaceano a tutti gl' intendenti: e nelle corte di Re e di signori del mondo, e anchora de' cherici era di lui in questa arte maggiore fama che di alcuno altro uomo.' From the Chronicle of Luca da Scharparia. These epistles were collected and printed by Josephus Rigaccius, Bibliopola Florentinus Celeberri-

of public documents, and Ciceronian phrases were henceforth reckoned among the indispensable engines of a diplomatic armoury. Offices of trust in the Papal Curia, the courts of the Despots, and the chanceries of the republics were thus thrown open to professional humanists. In the next age we shall find that neither princes, popes, nor priors could do without the services of trained stylists.

While concentrating attention upon this chief contribution of Salutato to Italian scholarship, I must not omit to notice, however briefly, the patronage he exercised at Florence. Both Poggio Bracciolini and Lionardo Bruni owed their advancement to his interest.<sup>57</sup> Giacomo da Scarparia, the first Florentine who visited Byzantium with a view to learning Greek, received from him the warmest encouragement, together with a commission for the purchase of manuscripts. To his activity in concert with Palla degli Strozzi was due the establishment of a Greek chair in the University of Florence. Nor was this zeal confined to the living. He composed the Lives of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, translated a portion of the 'Divine Comedy' into Latin for its wider circulation through the learned world, and caused the 'Africa' of Petrarch to be published.<sup>58</sup> When the illustrious Chancellor died, in the year 1406, at the age of seventy-six, he was honoured with a public funeral; the poet's crown was placed upon his brow, a panegyrical oration was recited, and a monument was erected to him in the Duomo.<sup>59</sup>

What Salutato accomplished for the style of public documents, Gasparino da Barzizza effected for familiar correspondence. After teaching during several years at Venice and Padua, he was summoned to Milan in 1418 by Filippo Maria Visconti, who ordered him to open a school in that capital. Gasparino made a special study of Cicero's Letters, and caused his pupils to imitate them as closely as possible, forming in this way an art of fluent letter-writing known afterwards as the *ars familiariter scribendi*. Epistolography in general, considered as a branch of elegant literature, occupied all the scholars of the Renaissance, and had the advantage of establishing a link of union between

mus, in 1741. Among the letters written for the Signory of Florence, that of congratulation to Gian Galeazzo Visconti on his murder of Bernabo (p. 16), that to the French Cardinals (p. 18), to Sir John Hawkwood, or Domino Joanni Aucud (p. 107), to the Marquis of Moravia (p. 110), and to the Romans (p. 141) deserve to be read.

<sup>57</sup> See the letter of Lionardo Bruni, quoted in *Lini Coluci Pieri Salutati Epistolæ*, p. xv. Coluccio's own letter recommending Lionardo to Innocent VII., ib. p. 5, and his numerous familiar letters to Poggio, ib. pp. 13, 173, &c.

<sup>58</sup> 'Certe cogitabam revidere librum, et si quid, ut scribis, vel absonum, vel contra metrorum regulam intolerabile deprehendissem, curiosius elimare et sicut Naso finxit in *Æneida*, singulos libros paucis versiculis quasi in argumenti formam brevissime resumere, et exinde pluribus sumptis exemplis, et per me ipsum correctis et diligenter revisis, unum ad Bononiense gymnasium, unum Parisiis, unum in Angliam cum meâ epistolâ de libri laudibus destinare, et unum in Florentiâ ponere in loco celebri,' &c. *Epistolæ*, part ii. p. 80.

<sup>59</sup> Among the other *laureati* who filled the post of Florentine Chancellor may be mentioned Dante's tutor, Brunetto Latini, Lionardo Bruni, Carlo Marsuppini, Poggio Bracciolini, and Benedetto Accolti, of whom more hereafter.

learned men in different parts of Italy. We therefore recognise in Gasparino the initiator, after Petrarch, of a highly important branch of Italian culture. This, when it reached maturity, culminated in the affectations of the Ciceronian purists. It must be understood that neither Salutato nor Gasparino attained to real polish of freedom of style. Compared even with the Latinity of Poggio, theirs is heavy and uncouth; while that of Poggio seems barbarous by the side of Poliziano's, and Poliziano in turn yields the palm of mere correctness to Bembo. It was only by degrees that the taste of the Italians formed itself, and that facility was acquired in writing a lost language. The fact that mediæval Latin was still used in legal documents, in conversation, in the offices of the Church, and in the theological works which formed the staple of all libraries, impeded the recovery of a classic style. When the Italians had finally learned how to polish prose, it was easy to hand on the art to other nations; while to sneer at their pedantry, as Erasmus did, was no matter of great difficulty. By that time their scrupulous and anxious preoccupation with purity of phrase threatened danger to the interests of liberal learning.

Hitherto, with the exception only of Boccaccio's Greek studies, I have had to trace the rise of Latin letters and to call particular attention to the cult of Cicero in Italy. It is now necessary to mention the advent of a man who played a part in the revival of learning only second to that of Petrarch. Manuel Chrysoloras, a Byzantine of noble birth, came to Italy during the Pontificate of Boniface IX., charged by the Emperor Palæologus with the mission of attempting to arm the states of Christendom against the Turk. Like all the Greeks who visited Western Europe, Chrysoloras first alighted in Venice; but the Republic of the Lagoons neither understood the secret nor felt the need of retaining these birds of passage. After a few months they almost invariably passed on to Florence—the real centre of the intellectual life of Italy. As soon as it was known that Chrysoloras, who enjoyed the fame of being the most accomplished and eloquent Hellenist of his age, had arrived with his companion, Demetrios Kydonios, in Venice, two noble Florentines, Roberto de' Rossi and Giacomo d'Angelo da Scarparia, set forth to visit him. The residence of the Greek ambassadors in Italy on this occasion was but brief; they found that, politically, they could effect nothing. But Giacomo da Scarparia journeyed in their society to Byzantium; while Roberto de' Rossi returned to Florence, full of the impression which the erudite philosophers had left upon him. The report he made to his fellow-citizens awoke a passionate desire in Palla degli Strozzi and Niccolo de' Niccoli to bring Chrysoloras in person to Florence. Their urgent appeals to the Signory resulted in an invitation whereby Chrysoloras in 1396 was induced to fill the Greek chair in the university. A yearly stipend of 150 golden florins, raised afterwards to 250, was voted for his maintenance. This engagement secured the future of Greek erudition in Europe. The merit of having brought the affair to a successful issue belongs principally to Palla degli



Strozzi, of whom Vespasiano wrote: 'There being in Florence exceeding good knowledge of Latin letters, but of Greek none, he resolved that this defect should be remedied, and therefore did all he could to make Manuel Grisolora visit Italy, using all his influence thereto and paying a large portion of the expense incurred.'<sup>60</sup> We must not however, omit the share which Coluccio Salutato,<sup>61</sup> by his influence with the Signory, and Niccolo de' Niccoli, by the interest he exerted with the Uffiziali dello Studio, may also claim. Among the audience of this the first true teacher of Greek at Florence were numbered Palla degli Strozzi, Roberto de' Rossi, Poggio Bracciolini, Lionardo Bruni, Francesco Barbaro, Giannozzo Manetti, Carlo Marsuppini, and Ambrogio Traversari—some of them young men of eighteen, others old and grey-haired, nearly all of them the scholars in Latinity of Giovanni da Ravenna. Nor was Florence the only town to receive the learning of Chrysoloras. He opened schools at Rome, at Padua, at Milan, and at Venice; so that his influence as a wandering professor was at least equal to that exercised by Giovanni da Ravenna.

The impulse communicated to the study of antiquity by Chrysoloras, and the noble enthusiasm of his scholars for pure literature, may best be understood from a passage in the 'Commentaries' of Lionardo Bruni, whereof the following is a compressed translation.<sup>62</sup>—Letters at this period grew mightily in Italy, seeing that the knowledge of Greek, intermitted for seven centuries, revived. Chrysoloras of Byzantium, a man of noble birth and well skilled in Greek literature, brought to us Greek learning. I at that time was following the civil law, though not ill-versed in other studies; for by nature I loved learning with ardour, nor had I given slight pains to dialectic and to rhetoric. Therefore, at the coming of Chrysoloras, I was made to halt in my choice of lives, seeing that I held it wrong to desert the law, and yet I reckoned it a crime to omit so great an occasion of learning the Greek literature; and oftentimes I reasoned with myself after this manner:—Can it be that thou, when thou mayest gaze on Homer, Plato, and Demosthenes, together with other poets, philosophers, and orators, concerning whom so great and so wonderful things are said, and mayest converse with them, and receive their admirable doctrine—can it be that thou wilt desert thyself and neglect the opportunity divinely offered thee? Through seven hundred years no one in all Italy has been master of Greek letters; and yet we acknowledge that all science is derived from them. Of civil law, indeed, there are in every city scores of doctors; but should this single and unique teacher of Greek be removed, thou wilt find no one to instruct thee. Conquered at last by these reasons, I delivered myself over to Chrysoloras with such passion that

<sup>60</sup> *Vite d' Uomini Illustri*, p. 271.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. the letter quoted by Voigt (p. 130) to Giacomo da Scarparia, which shows Coluccio's enthusiasm for Greek.

<sup>62</sup> Mur. xix. 920.

what I had received from him by day in hours of waking, occupied my mind at night in hours of sleep.'

The earnestness of this paragraph is characteristic of the whole period. The scholars who assembled in the lecture-rooms of Chrysoloras, felt that the Greek texts, whereof he alone supplied the key, contained those elements of spiritual freedom and intellectual culture without which the civilisation of the modern world would be impossible. Nor were they mistaken in what was then a guess rather than a certainty. The study of Greek implied the birth of criticism, comparison, research. Systems based on ignorance and superstition were destined to give way before it. The study of Greek opened philosophical horizons far beyond the dream-world of the churchmen and the monks; it stimulated the germs of science, suggested new astronomical hypotheses, and indirectly led to the discovery of America. The study of Greek resuscitated a sense of the beautiful in art and literature. It subjected the creeds of Christianity, the language of the Gospels, the doctrine of S. Paul, to analysis, and commenced a new era for Biblical inquiry. If it be true, as a writer no less sober in his philosophy than eloquent in his language has lately asserted, that, 'except the blind forces of nature, nothing moves in this world which is not Greek in its origin,' we are justified in regarding the point of contact between the Greek teacher Chrysoloras and his Florentine pupils as one of the most momentous crises in the history of civilisation. Indirectly, the Italian intellect had hitherto felt Hellenic influence through Latin literature. It was now about to receive that influence immediately from actual study of the masterpieces of the Attic authors. The world was no longer to be kept in ignorance of those 'eternal consolations' of the human race. No longer could the scribe omit Greek quotations from his Latin text with the dogged snarl of obtuse self-satisfaction—*Græca sunt, ergo non legenda*. The motto had rather to be changed into a cry of warning for ecclesiastical authority upon the verge of dissolution—*Græca sunt, ergo periculosa*: since the reawakening faith in human reason, the reawakening belief in the dignity of man, the desire for beauty, the liberty, audacity, and passion of the Renaissance, received from Greek studies their strongest and most vital impulse.

## CHAPTER III

### FIRST PERIOD OF HUMANISM

*Condition of the Universities in Italy—Bologna—High Schools founded from it—Naples under Frederick II.—Under the House of Anjou—Ferrara—Piacenza—Perugia—Rome—Pisa—Florence—Imperial and Papal Charters—Foreign Students—Professorial Staff—Subjects taught in the High Schools—Place assigned to Humanism—Pay of the Professors of Eloquence—Francesco Filelfo—The Humanists less powerful at the Universities—Method of Humanistic Teaching—The Book Market before Printing—Mediæval Libraries—Cost of Manuscripts—Stationarii and Pectararii—Negligence of Copyists—Discovery of Classical Codices—Boccaccio at Monte Cassino—Poggio at Constance—Convent of S. Gallen—Bruni's Letter to Poggio—Manuscripts discovered by Poggio—Nicholas of Treves—Collection of Greek Manuscripts—Aurispa, Filelfo, and Guarino—The Ruins of Rome—Their Influence on Humanism—Dante and Villani—Rienzi—His Idealistic Patriotism—Vanity—Political Incompetence—Petrarch's Relations with Rienzi—Injury to Monuments in Rome—Poggio's Roman Topography—Sentimental Feeling for the Ruins of Antiquity—Ciriaco of Ancona.*

HAVING so far traced the quickening of a new sense for antiquity among the Italians, it will be well at this point to consider the external resources of Humanism before continuing the history of the Revival in the fifteenth century. The condition of the universities, the state of the book trade before the invention of printing, and the discovery of manuscripts claim separate attention; nor may it be out of place to inquire what stimulus the enthusiasm for classical studies received from the ruins of Rome. A review of these topics will help to explain the circumstances under which the pioneers of culture had to labour, and the nature of the crusade they instituted against ignorance in every part of Europe.

The oldest and most frequented university in Italy, that of Bologna, is represented as having flourished in the twelfth century.<sup>1</sup> Its prosperity in early times depended greatly on the personal conduct of the principal professors, who, when they were not satisfied with their entertainment, were in the habit of seceding with their pupils to other cities. Thus high schools were opened from time to time in Modena, Reggio, and elsewhere by teachers who broke the oaths that bound them to reside in Bologna, and fixed their centre of education in a rival town. To make such temporary changes was not difficult in an age when what we have to call an university, consisted of masters and scholars, without college buildings, without libraries, without endowments, and with-

<sup>1</sup> Tiraboschi, *Storia della Letteratura Italiana*, vol. iv. p. 42 *et seq.*, vol. v. p. 60 *et seq.* Large quarto, Modena, 1787.

out scientific apparatus. The technical name for such institutions seems to have been *studium scholarium*, Italianised into *studio* or *studio pubblico*.<sup>2</sup> Among the more permanent results of these secessions may be mentioned the establishment of the high school at Vicenza by translation from Bologna in 1204, and the opening of a school at Arezzo under similar circumstances in 1215; the great University of Padua first saw the light in consequence of political discords forcing the professors to quit Bologna for a season.<sup>3</sup>

The first half of the thirteenth century witnessed the foundation of these *studi* in considerable numbers. That of Vercelli was opened in 1228, the municipality providing two certified copyists for the convenience of students who might wish to purchase text-books.<sup>4</sup> In 1224 the Emperor Frederick II., to whom the south of Italy owed a precocious eminence in literature, established the University of Naples by an Imperial diploma.<sup>5</sup> With a view to rendering it the chief seat of learning in his dominions, he forbade the subjects of the Regno to frequent other schools, and suppressed the University of Bologna by letters general. Thereupon Bologna joined the Lombard League, defied the emperor, and refused to close the schools, which numbered at that period about ten thousand students of various nationalities. In 1227 Frederick revoked his edict, and Bologna remained thenceforward unmolested. Political and internal vicissitudes, affecting all the Italian universities at this period, interrupted the prosperity of that of Naples. In the middle of the thirteenth century Salerno proved a dangerous rival; but when the House of Anjou was established in the kingdom of the Sicilies, special privileges were granted, restoring the high school of the capital to the first rank. Charles I. created a separate court of jurisdiction for its management. This consisted of a judge and three assessors, one for the control of foreigners, another for the subjects of the Regno, and the third for Italians from other states.

In 1264 we find a public school in operation at Ferrara. By its charter the professors were exempt from military service. The University of Piacenza came into existence a little earlier. Innocent IV. established it in 1248, with privileges similar to those of Paris and Bologna. An important group of *studi pubblici* owed their origin to Papal or Imperial charter in the first half of the fourteenth century. That of Perugia was founded in 1307 by a Bull of Clement V. That of Rome dated from 1303, in which year Boniface VIII. gave it a constitution by a special edict; but the translation of the Papal See to Avignon caused it to fall into premature decadence. The University of Pisa had already existed for some years, when it received a charter in 1343 from

<sup>2</sup> See Muratori, vol. viii. 15, 75, 372. Matteo Villani, lib. i. cap. 8.

<sup>3</sup> 'Hoc anno translatus est Studium Scholarium de Bononiâ Paduam.' Mur. viii. 372.

<sup>4</sup> They were called 'Exemplatores.' See Tiraboschi, vol. iv. lib. i. cap. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Muratori, vii. p. 997. Amari, *Storia dei Musselmani di Sicilia*, vol. iii. p. 706.

Clement VI. That of Florence was first founded in 1321.<sup>6</sup> In 1348 a place for its public buildings was assigned between the Duomo and the Palazzo Pubblico, on the site of what was afterwards known as the Collegium Eugenianum. A council of eight burghers was appointed for its management, and a yearly sum was set apart for its maintenance. In 1349 Clement VI. gave it the same privileges as the University of Bologna, while in 1364 it received an Imperial diploma from Charles IV. The same emperor granted charters to Siena in 1357, to Arezzo in 1356, and to Lucca in 1369. In 1362 Galeazzo Visconti obtained a charter for his University of Pavia from Charles IV., with the privileges of Paris, Oxford, and Bologna.

It will be observed that the majority of the *studi pubblici* obtained charters either from the Pope or the emperor, or from both, less for the sake of any immediate benefit to be derived from Papal or Imperial patronage, than because supreme authority in Italy was still referred to one or other of these heads. It was a great object with each city to increase its wealth by attracting foreigners as residents, and to retain the native youth within its precincts. The municipalities, therefore, accorded immunities from taxation and military service to *bona fide* students, prohibited their burghers from seeking rival places of learning, and in some cases allowed the university authorities to exercise a special jurisdiction over the motley multitude of scholars from all countries. How miscellaneous the concourse in some of the high schools used to be, may be gathered from the reports extracted by Tiraboschi from their registers. At Vicenza, for example, in 1209 we find the names of Bohemians, Poles, Frenchmen, Burgundians, Germans, and Spaniards, as well as of Italians of divers towns. The rectors of this *studio* in 1205 included an Englishman, a Provencal, a German, and a Cremonese. The lists of illustrious students at Bologna between 1265 and 1294 show men of all the European nationalities, proving that the foreigners attracted by the university must have formed no inconsiderable element in the whole population.<sup>7</sup> This will account for the prominent part played by the students from time to time in the political history of Bologna.<sup>8</sup>

The importance attached by great cities to their universities as a source of strength, may be gathered from the chapter in Matteo Villani's Chronicle describing the foundation of the *studio pubblico* in Florence.<sup>9</sup> He expressly mentions that the Signory were induced to take this step in consequence of the depopulation inflicted by the Black Death of 1348. By drawing residents to Florence from other States, they hoped to increase the number of the inhabitants, and to restore the decayed fame and splendour of the commonwealth.<sup>10</sup> At the same

<sup>6</sup> See Von Reumont, *Lorenzo de' Medici*, vol. i. p. 521.

<sup>7</sup> In 1320 there were at least 15,000 students in Bologna.

<sup>8</sup> See Sismondi, vol. iii. p. 349.

<sup>9</sup> Lib. i. cap. 8.

<sup>10</sup> 'Volendo attrarre gente alla nostra città, e dilatarla in onore, e dare materia a' suoi cittadini d' essere scienziati e virtudiosi.'

time they thought that serious studies might put an end to the demoralisation produced in all classes by the plague. With this object in view, they engaged the best teachers, and did not hesitate to devote a yearly sum of 2,500 golden florins to the maintenance of their high school. Bologna, which owed even more than Florence to its university, is said to have lavished as much as half of its revenue, about 20,000 ducats, on the pay of professors and other incidental expenses. The actual cost incurred by cities through their schools cannot, however, be accurately estimated, since it varied from year to year according to the engagements made with special teachers. At Pavia, for example, in 1400, the university supported in Canon Law several eminent doctors, in Civil Law thirteen, in Medicine five, in Philosophy three, in Astrology one, in Greek one, and in Eloquence one.<sup>11</sup> Whether this staff was maintained after the lapse of another twenty years we do not know for certain.

The subjects taught in the high schools were Canon and Civil Law, Medicine, and Theology. These faculties, important for the professional education of the public, formed the staple of the academical curriculum. Chairs of Rhetoric, Philosophy, and Astronomy were added according to occasion, the last sometimes including the study of judicial astrology. If we inquire how the humanists or professors of classic literature were related to the universities, we find that, at first at any rate, they always occupied a second rank. The permanent teaching remained in the hands of jurists, who enjoyed life engagements at a high rate of pay, while the Latinists and Grecians could only aspire to the temporary occupation of the Chair of Rhetoric, with salaries considerably lower than those of lawyers or physicians. The cause of this inferiority is easily explained. It was natural that important and remunerative branches of learning like law and medicine should attract a greater number of students than pure literature, and that their professors should be better paid than teachers of eloquence. Padua, Bologna, and Pavia in particular retained their legal speciality throughout the period of the Renaissance, and remained but little open to humanistic influences. At Padua we find from Sanudo's Diary<sup>12</sup> that an eminent jurist received a stipend of 1,000 ducats. A Doctor of Medicine at the same university, in 1491, received a similar stipend, together with the right of private practice. At Bologna the famous jurist Abbas Siculus (Niccolo de' Tudeschi) drew 800 scudi yearly; at Padua Giovanni da Imola in 1406, and Paolo da Castro in 1430, drew a sum of 600 ducats.<sup>13</sup> About the same time (1453) Lauro Quirino, who professed rhetoric at Padua, was paid at the rate of only forty ducats yearly, while Lorenzo Valla, at Pavia, filled the Chair of Eloquence with an annual stipend of fifty sequins. The disparity between the re-

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Corio, p. 290. He gives the names of the professors who attended at the funeral of Gian Galeazzo Visconti.

<sup>12</sup> Mur. xxii. 990.

<sup>13</sup> See Voigt, p. 447.

muneration of jurists and that of humanists was not so great at all the universities. Florence in especial formed a notable exception. From the date of its commencement the Florentine *studio* was partial to literature; and it is worth remarking that when Lorenzo de' Medici transferred the high school to Pisa, he retained at Florence the professors of the liberal sciences and *belles-lettres*. The great reputation of eminent rhetoricians, again, often secured for them temporary engagements at a high rate. Thus we gather from Rosmini's 'Life of Filelfo' that this humanist received from Venice the offer of 500 sequins yearly as remuneration for his professional services. Bologna proposed an annual stipend of 450 sequins when he undertook to lecture upon eloquence and moral philosophy. At Florence his income amounted to 350 golden florins, secured for three years, and subsequently raised to 450. With Siena he stipulated for 350 golden florins for two years. At Milan his Chair of Eloquence was endowed with 500 golden florins, and this salary was afterwards increased to 700. Nicholas V. offered him an annual income of 600 ducats if he would devote himself to the translation of Greek books into Latin, while Sixtus IV. tried to bring him to Rome by proposing 600 Roman florins as the stipend of the Chair of Rhetoric.

The fact, however, remains that while the special study of antiquity preoccupied the minds of the Italians, and attracted all the finer intellects among the youth ambitious of distinction, its professors never succeeded in taking complete possession of the universities. Their position there was always that of wandering stars and resident aliens. This accounts in some measure for the bitter hostility and arrogant scorn which they displayed against the teachers of theology and law and medicine. The real home of the humanists was in the Courts of princes, the palaces of the cultivated burghers, the Roman Curia, and the chanceries of the republics. As secretaries, house tutors, readers, Court poets, historiographers, public orators, and companions they were indispensable. We shall therefore find that the private academies formed by the literati and their patrons, the schools of princes established at Mantua and Ferrara, and the residences of great nobles play a more important part in the history of humanism than do the universities. At the same time the spirit of the new culture diffused by the humanists so thoroughly permeated the whole intellectual activity of the Italians, that in course of time the special studies of the high schools assumed a more literary and liberal form. The classics then supplied the starting-point for juristic and medical disquisitions. Poliziano was seen lecturing upon the Pandects of Justinian, while Pomponazzi made the Chair of Philosophy at Padua subservient to the exposition of materialism. This triumph of humanism, like its triumph in the Church, was effected less by immediate working on the universities than by a gradual and indirect determination of the whole race towards the study of antiquity.

In picturing to ourselves the method pursued by the humanists in



the instruction of their classes, we must divest our minds of all associations with the practice of modern professors. Very few of the students whom the master saw before him, possessed more than meagre portions of the text of Virgil or of Cicero; they had no notes, grammars, lexicons, or dictionaries of antiquities and mythology, to help them. It was therefore necessary for the lecturer to dictate quotations, to repeat parallel passages at full length, to explain geographical and historical allusions, to analyse the structure of sentences in detail, to provide copious illustrations of grammatical usage, to trace the stages by which a word acquired its meaning in a special context, to command a full vocabulary of synonyms, to give rules for orthography, and to have the whole Pantheon at his fingers' ends. In addition to this, he was expected to comment upon the meaning of his author, to interpret his philosophy, to point out the beauties of his style, to introduce appropriate moral disquisition on his doctrine, to sketch his biography, and to give some account of his relation to the history of his country and to his predecessors in the field of letters. In short, the professor of rhetoric had to be a grammarian, a philologist, an historian, a stylist, and a sage in one. He was obliged to pretend at least to an encyclopædic knowledge of the classics, and to retain whole volumes in his memory. All these requirements, which seem to have been satisfied by such men as Filelfo and Poliziano, made the profession of eloquence—for so the varied subject matter of humanism was often called—a very different business from that which occupies a lecturer of the present century. Scores of students, old and young, with nothing but pen and paper on the desks before them, sat patiently recording what the lecturer said. At the end of his discourses on the 'Georgics' or the 'Verrines,' each of them carried away a compendious volume, containing a transcript of the author's text, together with a miscellaneous mass of notes, critical, explanatory, ethical, æsthetical, historical, and biographical. In other words, a book had been dictated, and as many scores of copies as there were attentive pupils had been made.<sup>14</sup> The language used was Latin. No dialect of Italian could have been intelligible to the students of different nationalities who crowded the lecture-rooms. The elementary education in grammar requisite for following a professorial course of lectures had been previously provided by the teachers of the Latin schools, which depended for maintenance partly on the State<sup>15</sup> and partly on private enterprise. The Church does not seem to have undertaken the management of these primary boys' schools.

Since this was the nature of academical instruction in the humanities before the age of printing, it followed that the professor had a direct interest in frequently shifting his scene of operations. More than a certain number of books as I have just attempted to describe could not

<sup>14</sup> Many of the earliest printed editions of the Latin poets give an exact notion of what such lectures must have been. The text is embedded in an all-embracing commentary.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Villani's Statistics of Florence, and Corio's of Milan.

be carried in his head. After he had dictated his work on the 'Georgics' at Florence, he was naturally anxious to move to Milan and to do the same. A new audience gave new value to his lectures, and another edition, as it were, of his book was put in circulation. In the correspondence which passed between professors and the rectors of the high schools previously to an engagement, we sometimes find that the former undertake to explain particular authors during their proposed residence. On these authors they had no doubt bestowed the best years of their lives, making them the vehicle for all the miscellaneous learning they possessed, and grounding their fame upon the beauty, clearness, and copiousness of their exposition.<sup>16</sup>

Having described the conditions under which professorial teaching was conducted in the fifteenth century, it is now of some importance to form a notion of the state of the book market and the diffusion of MSS. before the invention of printing. Difficult as it is to speak with accuracy on these topics, some facts must be collected, seeing that the high price and comparative rarity of books contributed in a very important degree to determine the character of the instruction provided by the humanists.

Scarcity of books was at first a chief impedient to the study of antiquity. Popes and princes and even great religious institutions possessed far fewer books than many farmers of the present age. The library belonging to the Cathedral Church of S. Martino at Lucca in the ninth century contained only nineteen volumes of abridgements from ecclesiastical commentaries. The Cathedral of Novara in 1212 could boast copies of Boethius, Priscian, the 'Code of Justinia,' the 'Decretals,' and the 'Etymology' of Isidorus, besides a Bible and some devotional treatises.<sup>17</sup> This slender stock passed for great riches. Each of the precious volumes in such a collection was an epitome of mediæval art. Its pages were composed of fine vellum adorned with pictures.<sup>18</sup> The initial letter displayed elaborate flourishes and exquisitely illuminated groups of figures. The scribe took pains to render his calligraphy perfect, and to ornament the margins with crimson, gold, and blue. Then he handed the parchment sheets to the binder, who encased them in rich settings of velvet or carved ivory and wood, embossed with gold and precious stones. The edges were gilt and stamped with patterns. The clasps were of wrought silver, chased with niello. The price of such masterpieces was enormous. Borso d' Este, in 1464, gave eight gold ducats to Gherardo Ghislieri of Bologna for an illuminated Lancelotto, and in 1469 he bought a Josephus and Quintus Curtius for forty ducats.<sup>19</sup> His great Bible in two volumes is said to have cost 1,375

<sup>16</sup> For humorous but vivid pictures of a professor's lecture-room, see the macaronic poems of Odassi and Fossa quoted by me in vol. II. of this work.

<sup>17</sup> See Cantù, *Storia della Letteratura Italiana*, p. 105, note.

<sup>18</sup> 'Hodie Scriptores non sunt Scriptores sed Pictores,' quoted by Tiraboschi, vol. iv. lib. i. cap. 4.

<sup>19</sup> See Cantù, loc. cit. p. 104.

sequins. Rinaldo degli Albizzi notes in his Memoirs that he paid eleven golden florins for a Bible at Arezzo in 1406. Of these MSS. the greater part were manufactured in the cloisters, and it was here too that the martyrdom of ancient authors took place. Lucretius and Livy gave place to chronicles, antiphonaries, and homilies. Parchment was extremely dear, and the scrolls which nobody could read might be scraped and washed. Accordingly, the copyist erased the learning of the ancients, and filled the fair blank space he gained with litanies. At the same time it is but just to the monks to add that palimpsests have occasionally been found in which ecclesiastical works have yielded place to copies of the Latin poets used in elementary education.<sup>20</sup>

Another obstacle to the diffusion of learning was the incompetence of the copyists. It is true that at the great universities *stationarii*, who supplied the text-books in use to students were certified and subjected to the control of special censors called *peciarii*. Yet their number was not large, and when they quitted the routine to which they were accustomed their incapacity betrayed itself by numerous errors.<sup>21</sup> Petrararch's invective against the professional copyists shows the depth to which the art had sunk. 'Who,' he exclaims, 'will discover a cure for the ignorance and vile sloth of these copyists, who spoil everything and turn it to nonsense? If Cicero, Livy, and other illustrious ancients were to return to life, do you think they would understand their own works? There is no check upon these copyists, selected without examination or test of their capacity. Workmen, husbandmen, weavers, artisans, are not indulged in the same liberty.'<sup>22</sup> Coluccio Salutato repeats the same complaint, averring that the copies of Dante and Petrararch no more correspond to the originals than bad statues to the men they pretend to represent. At the same time the copyists formed a necessary and flourishing class of craftsmen. They were well paid. Ambrogio Traversari told his friend Giustiniani in 1430 that he could rec-

<sup>20</sup> See Comparetti, vol. i. p. 114.

<sup>21</sup> In Milan, in the fourteenth century, when the population was estimated at about 200,000, the town could boast of only fifty copyists. Tirab. loc. cit. cap. 4.

<sup>22</sup> *De Remediis utriusque Fortunæ*, lib. i. dial. 43, p. 42. The passage condensed above is so valuable for a right understanding of the humanistic feeling about manuscripts that I shall transcribe portions of the original:—'*Libri innumerabiles sunt mihi. Et errores innumeri, quidam ab impiis, alii ab indoctis editi. Illi quidem religioni ac pietati et divinis literis, hi naturæ ac justitiæ moribusque et liberalibus disciplinis seu historiæ rerumque gestarum fidei, omnes autem vero adversi; inque omnibus, et præsertim primis ubi majoribus agitur de rebus, et vera falsis immixta sunt, perdifficilis ac periculosa discretio est . . . scriptorum inscitiæ inertięque, corrumpenti omnia miscentique . . . ignavissima ætas hæc culinæ sollicita, literarum negligens, et coquos examinans non scriptores. Quisquis itaque pingere aliquid in membranis, manuque calamus versare didicerit, scriptor habebitur, doctrinæ omnis ignarus, expertus ingenii, artis egens . . . nunc confusus exemplaribus et exemplis, unum scribere polliciti, sic aliud scribunt ut quod ipse distaveris, non agnoscas . . . accedunt et scriptores nullâ frenati lege, nullo probati examine, nullo judicio electi; non fabris, non agricolis, non textoribus, non ulli fere artium tanta licentia est, cum sit in aliis leve periculum, in hac grave; sine selectu tamen scribendum ruunt omnes, et cuncta vastantibus certa sunt pretia.'*

commend him a good scribe at the pay of thirty golden florins a year and his keep. Under these circumstances it was usual for even the most eminent scholars, like Petrarch, Boccaccio, and Poggio, to make their own copies of MSS. Niccolo de' Niccoli transcribed nearly the whole of the codices that formed the nucleus of the Library of the Mark. Sometimes they sold them or made advantageous changes. Poggio, for example, sold two volumes of S. Jerome's 'Letters' to Lionello d' Este for 100 golden florins. Beccadelli bought a Livy from him for 120 golden florins, having parted with a farm to defray the expense. It is clear that the first step toward the revival of learning implied three things: first, the collection of MSS. wherever they could be saved from the indolence of the monks; secondly, the formation of libraries for their preservation; and, thirdly, the invention of an art whereby they might be multiplied cheaply, conveniently, and accurately.

The labour involved in the collection of classical manuscripts had to be performed by a few enthusiastic scholars, who received no help from the universities and their academical scribes, and who met with no sympathy in the monasteries they were bent on ransacking. The new culture demanded wholly new machinery; and new runners in the torch-race of civilisation sprang into existence. The high schools were contented with their summaries and glosses. The monks performed at best the work of earthworms, who unwittingly preserve the fragments of Greek architecture from corrosion by heaping mounds of mold and rubbish round them. Meanwhile the humanists went forth with the instinct of explorers to release the captives and awake the dead. From the convent libraries of Italy, from the museums of Constantinople, from the abbeys of Germany and Switzerland and France, the slumbering spirits of the ancients had to be evoked. The chivalry of learning, banded together for this service, might be likened to Crusaders. As the Franks deemed themselves thrice blest if they returned with relics from Jerusalem, so these new Knights of the Holy Ghost, seeking not the sepulchre of a risen God, but the tombs wherein the genius of the ancient world awaited resurrection, felt holy transports when a brown, begrimed, and crabbéd copy of some Greek or Latin author rewarded their patient quest. Days and nights they spent in carefully transcribing it, comparing their own MS. with the original, multiplying facsimilies, and sending them abroad with free hands to students who in their turn took copies, till the treasure-trove became the common property of all who could appreciate its value. This work of discovery began with Petrarch. I have already alluded to the journeys he undertook in the hope of collecting the lost MSS. of Cicero. It was carried on by Boccaccio. The account given by Benvenuto da Imola of Boccaccio's visit to Monte Cassino brings vividly before us both the ardour of these first explorers and the apathy of the Benedictines (who have sometimes been called the saviours of learning) with regard to the treasures of their own libraries:<sup>23</sup>—'With a view to the clearer un-

<sup>23</sup> 'Commentary on the *Divine Comedy*,' ap. Muratori, *Antiq. Ital.* vol. i. p. 1296.

derstanding of this text ('Paradiso,' xxii. 74), I will relate what my revered teacher, Boccaccio of Certaldo, humorously told me. He said that when he was in Apulia, attracted by the celebrity of the convent, he paid a visit to Monte Cassino, whereof Dante speaks. Desirous of seeing the collection of books, which he understood to be a very choice one, he modestly asked a monk—for he was always most courteous in manners—to open the library, as a favour, for him. The monk answered stiffly, pointing to a steep staircase, "Go up; it is open." Boccaccio went up gladly; but he found that the place which held so great a treasure, was without or door or key. He entered, and saw grass sprouting on the windows, and all the books and benches thick with dust. In his astonishment he began to open and turn the leaves of first one tome and then another, and found many and divers volumes of ancient and foreign works. Some of them had lost several sheets; others were snipped and pared all round the text, and mutilated in various ways. At length, lamenting that the toil and study of so many illustrious men should have passed into the hands of most abandoned wretches, he departed with tears and sighs. Coming to the cloister, he asked a monk whom he met, why those valuable books had been so disgracefully mangled. He answered that the monks, seeking to gain a few *soldi*, were in the habit of cutting off sheets and making psalters, which they sold to boys. The margins too they manufactured into charms, and sold to women. So then, O man of study, go to and rack your brains; make books that you may come to this!

What Italy contained of ancient codices soon saw the light. The visit of Poggio Bracciolini to Constance (1414) opened up for Italian scholars the stores that lay neglected in transalpine monasteries. Poggio's office of Apostolic Secretary obliged him to attend the Council of Constance for the purpose of framing reports and composing diplomatic documents. At the same time he had ample leisure on his hands, and this he spent in exploring the libraries of Swiss and Suabian convents. The treasures he unearthed at Reichenau, Weingarten, and above all S. Gallen, restored to Italy many lost masterpieces of Italian literature, and supplied students with full texts of authors who had hitherto been known in mutilated copies. The account he gave of his visit to S. Gallen in a Latin letter to a friend is justly celebrated.<sup>24</sup> After describing the wretched state in which the 'Institutions' of Quintilian had previously existed,<sup>25</sup> he proceeds as follows:—"I verily believe that, if we had not come to the rescue, he [Quintilian] must speedily have perished; for it cannot be imagined that a man magnificent, polished, elegant, urbane, and witty could much longer have endured the squalor of the prison-house in which I found him, the savagery of his jailers, the forlorn filth of the place. He was indeed right sad to look upon,

<sup>24</sup> Mur. xx. 160.

<sup>25</sup> Petrarch in 1350 found a bad copy at Florence. Poggio describes it thus:—"Is vero apud nos antea, Italos dico, ita laceratus erat, ita circumciscus culpâ, ut opinor, temporum, ut nulla forma, nullus habitus hominis in eo recognosceretur."

and ragged, like a condemned criminal, with rough beard and matted hair, protesting by his countenance and garb against the injustice of his sentence. He seemed to be stretching out his hands, calling upon the Romans, demanding to be saved from so unmerited a doom. Hard indeed it was for him to bear, that he who had preserved the lives of many by his eloquence and aid, should now find no redresser of his wrongs, no saviour from the unjust punishment awaiting him. But as it often happens, to quote Terence, that what you dare not wish for comes to you by chance, so a good fortune for him, but far more for ourselves, led us, while wasting our time in idleness at Constance, to take a fancy for visiting the place where he was held in prison. The monastery of S. Gallen lies at the distance of some twenty miles from that city. Thither, then; partly for the sake of amusement and partly of finding books, whereof we heard there was a large collection in the convent, we directed our steps. In the middle of a well-stocked library, too large to catalogue at present, we discovered Quintilian, safe as yet and sound, though covered with dust and filthy with neglect and age. The books, you must know, were not housed according to their worth, but were lying in a most foul and obscure dungeon at the very bottom of a tower, a place into which condemned criminals would hardly have been thrust; and I am firmly persuaded that if anyone would but explore those *ergastula* of the barbarians wherein they incarcerate such men, we should meet with like good fortune in the case of many whose funeral orations have long ago been pronounced. Besides Quintilian, we exhumed the three first books and a half of the fourth book of the "Argonautica" of Flaccus, and the "Commentaries" of Asconius Pedianus upon eight orations of Cicero.' Poggio, immediately after this discovery, set himself to work at transcribing the Quintilian, a labour accomplished in the brief space of thirty-two days. The MS. was then despatched to Lionardo Bruni, who received it with ecstatic welcome, as appears from this congratulatory epistle addressed to Poggio:—

'The republic of letters has reason to rejoice not only in the works you have discovered, but also in those you have still to find. What a glory for you it is to have brought to light by your exertions the writings of the most distinguished authors! Posterity will not forget that MSS. which were bemoaned as lost beyond the possibility of restoration, have been recovered, thanks to you. As Camillus was called the second founder of Rome, so may you receive the title of the second author of the works you have restored to the world. Through you we now possess Quintilian entire; before we only boasted of the half of him, and that defective and corrupt in text. O precious acquisition! O unexpected joy! And shall I, then, in truth be able to read the whole of that Quintilian which, mutilated and deformed as it has hitherto appeared, has formed my solace? I conjure you send it me at once, that at least I may set eyes on it before I die.'

In addition to the authors named above, Poggio discovered and copied with his own hand MSS. of Lucretius and Columella. Silius

Italicus, Manilius, and Vitruvius owed their resurrection to his industry. At Langres he found a copy of Cicero's oration for Cæcina; at Monte Cassino a MS. of Frontinus. Ammianus Marcellinus, Nonius Marcellus, Probus, Flavius Caper, and Eutyches are also to be ranked among the captives freed by him from slavery. In exploring foreign convents where he suspected that ancient authors might lie buried, he spared neither trouble nor expense. 'No severity of winter cold, no snow, no length of journey, no roughness of roads, prevented him from bringing the monuments of literature to light,' wrote Francesco Barbaro.<sup>26</sup> Nor did he recoil from theft, if theft seemed necessary to secure a precious codex. In a letter to Ambrogio Traversari he relates his negotiations with a monk for the fraudulent abduction of an Ammianus and a Livy from a convent library in Hersfeld.<sup>27</sup> Not unfrequently his most golden anticipations with regard to literary treasures were deceived, as when a Dane appeared at the Court of Martin V. bragging of a complete Livy to be found in a Cistercian convent near Röskilde. This man protested he had seen the MS., and described the characters in which it was written with some minuteness. At Poggio's instance the Cardinal Orsini sent off a special messenger to seek for this, which would have been the very phoenix of MSS. to the Latinists of that period, while Cosimo de' Medici put his agents at Lübeck to work for the same purpose. All their efforts were in vain, however. The Livy could not be discovered, and the Dane passed for a liar, in spite of the corroboration his story received from another traveller.<sup>28</sup> Poggio himself, who would willingly have ransacked Europe for a MS., was jealous of money spent on any other object. In his treatise 'De Infelicitate Principum' he complains that 'these exalted personages [popes and princes] spend their days and their wealth in pleasure, in unworthy pursuits, in pestiferous and destructive wars. So great is their mental torpor that nothing can rouse them to search after the works of excellent writers, by whose wisdom and learning mankind are taught the way to true happiness.' This lamentation, written probably under the unfavourable impression produced upon his mind by the Papal Court, where as yet the spirit of humanism had hardly penetrated, must not be taken in any strict sense. Never was there a time in the world's history when money was spent more freely upon the collection and preservation of MSS., and when a complete machinery was put in motion for the sake of securing literary treasures. Prince vied with prince, and eminent burgher with burgher, in buying books. The commercial correspondents of the Medici and other great Florentine houses, whose banks and discount offices extended over Europe and the Levant, were instructed to purchase relics of antiquity without regard for cost, and to forward them to Florence. The most acceptable present that could

<sup>26</sup> Mur. xx. 169. Cf. the Elegy of Landino quoted in the notes to Roscoe's *Lorenzo*, p. 388.

<sup>27</sup> Voigt, p. 138.

<sup>28</sup> See Voigt, p. 139, for this story.



be sent to a king was a copy of a Roman historian. The best credentials which a young Greek arriving from Byzantium could use to gain the patronage of men like Palla degli Strozzi was a fragment of some ancient; the merchandise ensuring the largest profit to a speculator who had special knowledge in such matters was old parchment covered with crabbed characters.

The history of the foundation of libraries will form part of the next chapter. For the present it is requisite to mention some of Poggio's fellow-workmen in the labour of collection. Among these a certain Nicholas of Treves, employed to receive monies due to the Papal Curia in Germany, deserves a place, seeing that in 1429 he sent the most complete extant copy of Plautus to Rome. Bartolommeo da Montepulciano, following the lead of Poggio, pursued investigations while at Constance, and discovered the lost writings of Vegetius and Pompeius Festus. In 1409 Lionardo Bruni chanced upon a good MS. of Cicero's letters at Pistoja, and about the year 1425 a magnificent capture of Cicero's rhetorical treatises was made at Lodi in the Duomo by Gherardo Landriani. The extant works of Tacitus, so ardently desired, were not collected earlier than the reign of Leo.

While Poggio was releasing the Latin authors from their northern prisons, and sending them to walk like princes through the Courts and capitals of Italy, three other scholars devoted no less energy to the collection of Greek MSS. Giovanni Aurispa, on his return from Byzantium in 1423, brought with him 238 codices, while Guarino of Verona and Francesco Filelfo both arrived in Italy heavily laden. There is an old story that Guarino lost a part of his cargo at sea, and landed with hair whitened by the grief this misfortune cost him. Considering the special advantages enjoyed by these three scholars, who were pupils of the learned Manuel Chrysoloras, and before whose eager curiosity the libraries of Byzantium remained open through nearly half a century previous to the fall of the Greek Empire, we have good reason to believe that the greater part of Attic and Alexandrian literature known to the later Greeks was transferred to Italy. The avidity shown by the Florentines for codices and copies, the opportunities afforded by their mercantile connection with Constantinople, and the obvious interest which the court of Byzantium at that crisis had in gratifying their taste for such acquisitions, contribute to render it unlikely that any of the more important and illustrious authors were destroyed in the taking of the city by the Turk.<sup>29</sup> It is probable that causes similar to those which slowly wrought the ruin of Latin literature in the West—the apathy of an uncultured public, the rancorous animosity of a superstitious clergy, and the decay of students as a class—had long before the age of the Renaissance ruined beyond the possibility of recovery those master-

<sup>29</sup> See the emphatic language about Palla degli Strozzi, Cosimo de' Medici, and Niccolò de' Niccoli, in Vespasiano's *Lives*. Islam, moreover, as is proved by Pletho's Life, was at that period more erudite than Hellas.

pieces whereof we still deplore the loss.<sup>30</sup> The preservation of Neoplatonic and Patristic literature in comparative completeness, while so much that was more valuable perished, may be ascribed to the theological content of these writings.

Not to render some account of the effect produced upon the minds of scholars in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries by the sight of Roman ruins in decay, would be to omit an important branch of the subject I have undertaken. Yet this part of the inquiry leads us into a region somewhat different from that hitherto traversed in the present chapter, since it properly belongs to the history of enthusiasm. No small portion of the motive impulse that determined the Revival was derived from the admiration, curiosity, and awe excited by the very stones of ancient Rome. During the Middle Ages the right point of view for studying the architectural works of the Romans had been lost. History yielded ever more and more to legend, until at last it was believed that demons and magicians had suspended those gigantic vaults in air. Telesmatic virtues were attributed to figures carved on temple-fronts and friezes, while the great name of Virgil attached itself to what remained unhurt of Latin art in Rome and Naples.<sup>31</sup> The Rome of the *Mirabilia* was supposed to be the handiwork of fiends constrained by poets of the bygone age with spells of power to move hell from its centre. This transference of interest from the real to the fanciful, from the substantial to the visionary, was characteristic of the whole attitude assumed by the mind in the Middle Ages. History, literature, and art alike submitted to the alchemy of the imagination.<sup>32</sup> At the same time the very grossness of these fables testified to the profound impression produced by the ruins of the Eternal City, and to the haunting magic of a memory surviving degradation and decay. When the Anglo-Saxon pilgrims returned from Rome in the eighth century, the fascination of the great works they had seen expressed itself in a memorable prophecy.<sup>33</sup> 'As long as the Coliseum stands, Rome shall stand; when the Coliseum falls, Rome will fall; when Rome falls, the world will fall.'

About the year 1300 a new historic sense appears to have arisen in Italy. Instead of dreams and legends, the positive facts of the past began to have once more their value. This change might be compared to the discovery we make upon the borderland of sleep and waking, when

<sup>30</sup> I have touched upon this subject elsewhere. See *Studies of Greek Poets*, second series, pp. 304-307. In order to form a conception of the utter decline of Byzantine learning after Photius, it is needful to read the passages in Petrarch's letters, where even Calabria is compared favourably with Constantinople. In a state of ignorance so absolute as he describes, it is possible that treasures existed unknown to professed students, and therefore undiscovered by Filelfo and his fellow-workers. The testimony of Demetrius Chalcondylas, quoted by Didot, *Alde Manuce*, p. xiv., goes to show that the Greeks attributed their losses in large measure to the malice of the priests.

<sup>31</sup> The details of Virgil's romance occupy the first half of Comparetti's second volume on *Virgil in the Middle Ages*. For the English version of this legend see Thoms.

<sup>32</sup> See above, pp. 353-360.

<sup>33</sup> Gibbon, ch. lxxi.

what we fancied was a figure draped in white by our bedside turns out to be the wall with moonlight shining on it. Giovanni Villani, when he gazed upon the baths and amphitheatres of Rome, was not moved to think of the fiends who raised them, but of the buried grandeur of the Roman commonwealth.<sup>34</sup> What Rome once was, Florence may one day become, was the reflection that impelled him to write the chronicle of his native town. Dante, who with Villani witnessed the Jubilee of 1300, cried that the very stones of Rome were sacred. 'Whoso robs her, or despoils her, with blasphemy of act offendeth God, who only for His own use made her holy.'<sup>35</sup> The city was to him the outward symbol and terrestrial station of that God-appointed Monarchy for ruling all the peoples of the earth in peace. His most enthusiastic speculations, as well as the practical policy set forth in his epistles, attached themselves to Rome as a reality; nor did he ever tire of bidding German emperors return and fix their throne upon the bank of Tiber. We know now that this idealism was a delusion, no less incapable of realisation than it was pernicious to the liberties of the Italians. It haunted the imagination of the race, however, until at last, as I have said above, the proper vent was found in humanism.

The same passion for Rome took different form in the mind of another and less noble patriot. It impelled Rienzi to conceive the plan of rehabilitating the Republic. The Popes were far away at Avignon. The emperors seemed to have forgotten Italy. Yet Rome remained, and the mere name of Rome was Empire. Why should not the *Senatus Populusque Romanus*, whose initials still survived in uncial letters upon blocks of travertine and marble, be restored to place and power? Wandering among those spacious vaults, and lingering beneath the triumphal arches, where the marks of chariot-wheels were traced upon the massive paved work of the Roman ways, the young enthusiast conceived that even he might live to be the Tribune of that people, born invincible, and called by destiny to rule the world. With what energy he devoted himself to studying the histories of Livy, Sallust, and Valerius Maximus; how he strove to master the meaning of inscriptions found among the wrecks of Rome; with what eloquence he moved his fellow-citizens to sympathy—are familiar matters not only to scholars, but to readers of romance. His vision of the restored Republic seemed for a moment destined to become reality. The Romans placed the power of life and death, of revenues and armies, in the hands of the seer, who had stirred them by his rhetoric. Rienzi took rank among the potentates of Italy. Even the Papal Court acknowledged him.

What followed proved the political incapacity of the new dictator, his want of critical insight into the ideal he had set before himself. There is something both pathetic and ridiculous in the vanity displayed by this barber's son exalted to a place among the princes. Not satisfied

<sup>34</sup> Vol. I., *Age of the Despots*, p. 128.

<sup>35</sup> *Purg.* xxxiii. 58.

with calling himself Tribune and Knight, the style he affected in his correspondence with Clement VI. ran as follows:—'Candidatus, Spiritus Sancti Miles, Nicolaus Severus et Clemens, Liberator Urbis, Zelator Italiae, Amator Orbis, et Tribunus Augustus.' Like Icarus, he spread these waxen wings to the sun's noontide blaze. The same extravagant confusion of things sacred and profane, classical and mediæval, marked the pageantry of his State ceremonials in Rome. On August 15, 1347, in celebration of his election to the Tribunate, he assumed six crowns—of ivy, myrtle, laurel, oak, olive, and gilt silver. His arms were blazoned with the keys of Peter and the letters S.P.Q.R. His senatorial sceptre was surmounted, not with the eagle or the wolf of Romulus, but with a golden ball and cross enclosing the relic of a saint. The poetic fancy could not have suggested a more striking allegory to illustrate an indiscriminating reverence for the Imperial and Pontifical prestige of Rome, than was presented in this tragic farce of actual history. Not in this way, by a mixture of Christian and Pagan titles, by emblematic pomp, by heraldry and declamation, could the old Republic be brought to life again. The very attempt to do so proved how far the mind of man, awaking from the long sleep of the Middle Ages, was removed from the severe simplicity that gave its strength to ancient Rome. Along those giddy parapets of fame we watch Rienzi walking through his months of glory like a somnambule sustained by an internal dream. That he should fall was inevitable. With him expired the Utopia of a Roman commonwealth, to be from time to time revived as an ineffectual fancy in the brains of a few visionaries.<sup>36</sup>

The relations of Petrarch to Rienzi offer matter for curious reflection, while they illustrate the part played by the enthusiasm for ancient Rome in the early history of humanism. Petrarch and Rienzi had been friends and correspondents before the emergence of the latter into public notice; and when the Tribune seemed about to satisfy the dearest desire of the poet's heart by re-establishing the Roman commonwealth, Petrarch addressed him with an animated letter of congratulation and encouragement.<sup>37</sup> In his charmed eyes he seemed a hero, *vir magnanimus*, worthy of the ancient world, a new Romulus, a third Brutus, a Camillus. The Roman burghers, that scum and sediment of countless races, barbarised by the lingering miseries of the Middle Ages, needed nothing, it appeared, but words and wishes to make them once again *cives Romani*, no longer clamorous for bread and games, but ready to reconquer all their ancestors had lost.<sup>38</sup> 'Where,' cried Petrarch, 'can the empire of the world be found, except in Rome? Who can dispute the Roman right? What force can stand against the name of Romans?' Neither the patriot nor the scholar discerned that the revival they were destined to inaugurate was intellectual. Though the spirit of the times refused a political Renaissance, refused to Italy the maintenance of even such

<sup>36</sup> Stefano Porcari, for example. See Vol. I., *Age of the Despots*, pp. 190, 194.

<sup>37</sup> *De Capessendâ Libertate, Hortatoria*, p. 535.

<sup>38</sup> See Petrarch's *Epistle to the Roman People*, p. 712.

freedom as she then possessed, far more refused a resuscitation of ancient Rome's imperial sway, yet both Rienzi and Petrarch persisted in believing that, because they glowed with fervour for the past, because they could read inscriptions, because they expressed their desires eloquently, the world's great age was certain to begin anew. It was a capital fault of the Renaissance to imagine that words could work wonders, that a rhetorician's *stylus* might become the wand of Prospero. Seeming passed for being in morals, politics, and all affairs of life. I have already touched on this as a capital defect in Petrarch's character; but it was a weakness inherent not only in him and in the age he inaugurated, but one, moreover, that has influenced the whole history of the Italians for evil. Sounding phrases like the *barbaros expellere* of Julius II., like the *va fuori d' Italia* of Garibaldian hymns, from time to time have roused the nation to feverish enthusiasm, too soon succeeded by rejected apathy. When the inefficiency of Rienzi was proved, all that remained for Petrarch was to warn and scold.

The interest excited in Petrarch by the sight of Rome's ruins was important for his humanistic ideal. They stirred him as a moralist, an antiquarian, and a man who owed his mental vigour to the past. He tells how often he used to climb above the huge vaults of the Baths of Diocletian in company with his friend Giovanni Colonna.<sup>39</sup> Seated there among the flowering shrubs and scented herbs that clothed decay with loveliness, they held discourse concerning the great men of old, and deplored the mutability of all things human. Whatever the poet had read of Roman grandeur was brought back to his mind with vivid meaning during his long solitary walks. He never doubted that he knew for certain where Evander's palace stood, and where the cave of Cacus opened on the Tiber. The difficulties of modern antiquarian research had not been yet suggested, and his fancy was free to map out the topography of the seven hills as pleased him best. Yet he complained that nowhere was less known about Rome than in Rome itself.<sup>40</sup> This ignorance he judged the most fatal obstacle to the resurrection of the city.<sup>41</sup> The palaces where dwelt those heroes of the past had fallen into ruins; the temples of the gods were desecrated; the triumphal arches were crumbling; the very walls had yielded to decay. None of the Romans cared to arrest destruction; they even robbed the marble columns and entablatures in order to deck Naples with the spoils.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>39</sup> *Epist. Fam.* lib. ii. 14, p. 605; lib. vi. 2, p. 657.

<sup>40</sup> 'Qui enim hodie magis ignari rerum Romanarum sunt, quam Romani Cives? Invisus dico, nusquam minus Roma cognoscitur quam Romæ.' *Epist. Fam.* lib. ii. 14, p. 658.

<sup>41</sup> 'Quis enim dubitare potest, quin illico surrectura sit si cœperit se Roma cognoscere?' *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> 'Vi vel senio collapsa palatia, quæ quondam ingentes tenuere viri, diruptos arcus triumphales . . . indignum de vestris marmoreis columnis, de liminibus templorum, ad quæ nuper ex toto orbe concursus devotissimus fiebat, de imaginibus sepulchrorum, sub quibus patrum vestrorum venerabilis cinis erat, ut reliquas sileam, desidiosa Neapolis adornatur.' *Ibid.* p. 536.

The last remnants of the city would soon, he exclaimed, be levelled with the ground. Time has been unable to destroy them; but man was ruining what Time had spared.<sup>43</sup>

There is no doubt that, shortly before the date of Petrarch's visits to Rome, the city had suffered grievously in its monuments. We know, for instance, that the best preserved of the theatres, baths, and tombs formed the residences and fortresses of nobles in the Middle Ages; and when we read that in 1258 the senator Brancalone found it necessary to destroy one hundred and forty of these fortified dwellings, we obtain a standard for measuring the injury that must have ensued to precious works of classic architecture. The ruins, moreover, as Petrarch hinted, had been used as quarries. What was worse, the burghers burned the marbles, rich, perhaps, with inscriptions and carved bas-reliefs, for lime. We shall shortly see what Poggio relates upon this topic. For the present it will suffice to quote an epigram of Pius II., written some time after the revival of enthusiasm for antiquity:—

Oblectat me, Roma, tuas spectare ruinas,  
Ex cujus lapsu gloria prisca patet.  
Sed tuus his populus muris defossa vetustis  
Calcis in obsequium marmora dura coquit.  
Impia ter centum si sic gens egerit annos,  
Nullum his indicium nobilitatis erit.<sup>44</sup>

Poggio Bracciolini opens a new epoch in Roman topography. The ruins that had moved the superstitious wonder of the Middle Ages, that had excited Rienzi to patriotic enthusiasm, and Petrarch to reflections on the instability of human things, were now for the first time studied in a truly antiquarian spirit. Poggio read them like a book, comparing the testimony they rendered with that of Livy, Vitruvius, and Frontinus, and seeking to compile a catalogue of the existing fragments of old Rome. The first section of his treatise 'De Varietate Fortunæ,' forms by far the most important source of information we possess relating to the state of Rome in the fifteenth century.<sup>45</sup> It appears that the Baths of Caracalla and Diocletian could still boast of columns and marble incrustations, but that within Poggio's own recollection the marbles had been stripped from Cæcilia Metella's tomb, and the so-called Temple

<sup>43</sup> 'Quanta quod integræ fuit olim gloria Romæ,  
Reliquiæ testantur adhuc, quas longior ætas  
Frangere non valuit, non vis, aut ira cruenti  
Hostis, ab egregiis franguntur civibus heu, heu.'

Petr. *Epist. Metr.* lib. ii. p. 98.

<sup>44</sup> 'It delights me to contemplate thy ruins, Rome, the witness amid desolation to thy pristine grandeur. But thy people burn thy marbles for lime, and three centuries of this sacrilege will destroy all sign of thy nobleness.' Compare a letter from Alberto degli Alberti to Giovanni de' Medici, quoted by Fabroni, *Cosm. Vita*, Adnot. 86. The real pride of Rome was still her ruins. Nicolo and Ugo da Este journeyed in 1396 to Rome, 'per vedere quelle magnificenze antiche che al presente si possono vedere in Roma.' Murat. xxiv. 845.

<sup>45</sup> My references are made to the Paris edition of 1723. The first book is sometimes cited under the title of *Urbis Romæ Descriptio*.

of Concord had been pillaged.<sup>46</sup> Among the ruins ascribed to the period of the Republic are mentioned a bridge, an arch, a tomb, a temple, a building on the Capitol, and the pyramid of Cestius.<sup>47</sup> Besides these, Poggio enumerates, as referable chiefly to the Imperial age, eleven temples, seven *thermæ*, the Arches of Titus, Severus, and Constantine, parts of the Arches of Trajan, Faustina, and Gallienus, the Coliseum, the Theatres of Pompey and Marcellus, the Circus Agonalis and Circus Maximus, the columns of Trajan and Antonine, the two horses ascribed to Pheidias and Praxiteles, together with other marble statues, one bronze equestrian statue, and the mausoleums of Augustus and Hadrian.

We have to regret that Poggio's description was subservient and introductory to a rhetorical dissertation. Had he applied himself to the task of tabulating more minutely what he had observed, his work would have been infinitely precious to the archæologist. No one knew more about the Roman buildings than he did. No one felt the impression of their majesty in desolation more profoundly. The mighty city appeared to him, he said, like the corpse of a giant, like a queen in slavery. The sight of her magnificence, despoiled and shorn of ornaments as she had been, moved him daily to deeper admiration. It was his custom to lead strangers from point to point among the ruins, in order to enjoy the effect produced upon fresh minds by their stupendous evidence of strength and greatness in decay.

The pathos of this former empress of the world exposed to insult and indignity had not been first felt by Poggio. Petrarch described her as an aged matron with grey hair and pale cheeks, whose torn and sordid raiment ill accorded with the nobleness of her demeanor.<sup>48</sup> Fazio degli Uberti personified her as a majestic woman, wrapped around with rags, who pointed out to him the ruins of her city, 'to the end that he might understand how fair she was in years of old.'<sup>49</sup>

In this way a sentimental feeling for the relics of the past grew up and flourished side by side with the archæological interest they excited. The literature of the Renaissance abounds in matter that might be used in illustration of this remark,<sup>50</sup> while nothing was commoner in art than to paint for backgrounds broken arches and decayed buildings, 'whose ruins are even pitied.' The double impulse of romantic sentiment and antiquarian curiosity, set going in this age of the Revival, contributed no little to the development of architecture, sculpture, and painting. In the section of my work which deals with the fine arts in Italy will be

<sup>46</sup> 'Juxta viam Appiam, ad secundum lapidem, integrum vidi sepulchrum L. Cæcilie Metellæ, opus egregium, et id ipsum tot sæculis intactum, ad calcem postea majori ex parte exterminatum' (p. 19). 'Capitolio contigua forum versus superest porticus ædis Concordiæ, quam, cum primum ad urbem accessi, vidi fere integram, opere marmoreo admodum specioso; Romani postmodum, ad calcem ædem totam et porticus partem, disjectis columnis, sunt demoliti.' *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> Pp. 8, 9.

<sup>48</sup> *De Pacificandâ Italiâ, Ad Carolum Quartum*, p. 531.

<sup>49</sup> In the *Dittamondo*, about 1360.

<sup>50</sup> Such, for example, as Boccaccio's description of the ruins of Baiæ in the *Fiammetta*, Sannazzaro's lines on the ruins of Cumæ, Æneas Sylvius Piccolomini's notes on ancient sites in Italy.



found the proper sequel to this subject. Meanwhile the history of anti-quarian research in Rome itself will be resumed in another chapter of this volume.

Among the representative men of the first period of the Revival must be mentioned an enthusiast who devoted his whole life to topographical studies and to the copying of classical inscriptions. Ciriaco de' Pizzicollì was born about 1404 at Ancona, and from this town he took the name he bears among the learned. Like many other pioneers of erudition, he was educated for commerce, and had slender opportunities for acquiring the dead languages in his youth. His manhood was spent in restless journeying, at first undertaken for the purpose of trade, but afterwards for the sole object of discovery. Smitten with zeal for classical antiquity, he made himself a tolerable Latin scholar, and gained a fair knowledge of Greek. In the course of his long wanderings he ransacked every part of Italy, Greece, and the Greek islands, collecting medals, gems, and fragments of sculpture, buying manuscripts, transcribing records, and amassing a miscellaneous store of archæological information. The enthusiasm that possessed him was so untempered by sobriety that it excited the suspicion of contemporaries. Some regarded him as a man of genuine learning; others spoke of him as a flighty, boastful, and untrustworthy fanatic.<sup>51</sup> The mistakes he made in copying inscriptions depreciated the general value of his labours, while he was even accused of having passed off fabrications on the credulity of the public. The question of his alleged forgeries has been discussed at length by Tiraboschi.<sup>52</sup> To settle it at this distance of time is both unimportant and impossible. While we may well believe that Ciriaco was a conceited enthusiast, accepting as genuine what he ought to have rejected, and interpreting according to his fancy rather than the letter of his text, his life retains real value for the student of the Revival. In him the curiosity of the new age reached its acme of expansiveness. The passion for discovery pursued him from shore to shore, and the vision of the past, to be reconquered by the energy of the present, haunted his imagination till the moment of his death. When asked what object he had set his heart upon in those perpetual journeyings, he answered, 'I go to awake the dead.' That word, the motto for the first age of the Revival, explains the fanaticism of Ciriaco, and is a sufficient title to fame.

<sup>51</sup> Filippo Maria Visconti is said to have denounced him as an impostor. Ambrogio Traversari mentions his coins and gems with mistrust. Poggio describes him as a conceited fellow with no claim to erudition. On the other hand, he gained the confidence of Eugenius IV., and received the panegyrics of Filelfo, Barbaro, Bruni, and others. See Tiraboschi, vol. vi. lib. i. cap. 5.

<sup>52</sup> In the place just cited. The temptation, at this epoch of discovery, when criticism was at a low ebb, and curiosity was frantic, to pass off forgeries upon the learned world must have been very great. The most curious example of this literary deception is afforded by Annius of Viterbo, who, in 1498, published seventeen books of spurious histories, pretending to be the lost works of Manetho, Berosus, Fabius Pictor, Archilochus, Cato, &c. Whether he was himself an impostor or a dupe is doubtful. A few of his contemporaries denounced the histories as patent fabrications. The majority accepted them as genuine. Their worthlessness has long been undisputed. See Tiraboschi, vol. vi. lib. iii. cap. i.

## CHAPTER IV

### SECOND PERIOD OF HUMANISM

*Intricacy of the Subject—Division into Four Periods—Place of Florence—Social Conditions favourable to Culture—Palla degli Strozzi—His Encouragement of Greek Studies—Plan of a Public Library—His Exile—Cosimo de' Medici—His Patronage of Learning—Political Character—Love of Building—Generosity to Students—Foundation of Libraries—Vespasiano and Thomas of Sarzana—Niccolo de' Niccoli—His Collection of Codices—Description of his Mode of Life—His Fame as a Latinist—Lionardo Bruni—His Biography—Translations from the Greek—Latin Treatises and Histories—His Burial in Santa Croce—Carlo Aretino—Fame as a Lecturer—The Florentine Chancery—Matteo Palmieri—Giannozzo Manetti—His Hebrew Studies—His Public Career—His Eloquence—Manetti ruined by the Medici—His Life in Exile at Naples—Estimate of his Talents—Ambrogio Traversari—Study of Greek Fathers—General of the Camaldolese Order—Humanism and Monasticism—The Council of Florence—Florentine Opinion about the Greeks—Gemistus Pletho—His Life—His Philosophy—His Influence at Florence—Cosimo de' Medici and the Florentine Academy—Study of Plato—Pletho's Writings—Platonists and Aristotelians in Italy and Greece—Bessarion—His Patronage of Greek Refugees in Rome—Humanism in the Smaller Republics—In Venice.*

THE great difficulty with which a critic desirous of rendering a succinct account of this phase of Italian culture has to deal is the variety and complexity of the subject. It is easy to perceive the unity of the humanistic movement, and to regard the scholars of the fifteenth century as a literary community with well-defined relations to each other. Yet when we attempt to trace the growth of scholarship in all its branches, the peculiar conditions of political and social life in Italy present almost insuperable obstacles to any continuity of treatment. The republics, the principalities, and the Church have each their separate existence. Venice, Florence, Naples, Milan, Rome, Ferrara, form distinct and independent centres, imposing their own specialties upon the intellectual activity of citizens and aliens. The humanists, meanwhile, to some extent efface these local differences, spreading a network of common culture over cities and societies divided by all else but interest in learning. To these combinations and permutations, arising from the contact of the scholars with their patrons in the several States of Italy, is due the intricacy of the history of the Revival. The same men of eminence appear by turns in each of the chief Courts and commonwealths, passing with bewildering rapidity from north to south and back again, in one place demanding attention under one head of the subject, in another presenting new yet not less important topics for investigation. What Filippo Maria Visconti, for instance, required from Filelfo had

but little in common with the claims made on him by Nicholas V., while his activity as a satirist and partisan of Florence differed from his labour as a lecturer at Siena. Again, the biography of each humanist to some extent involves that of all his contemporaries. The coteries of Rome are influenced by the cliques of Naples; the quarrels of Lorenzo Valla ramify into the squabbles of Guarino; political animosity combines with literary jealousy in the disputes of Poggio with Filelfo. While some of the most eminent professors remain stationary in their native or adopted towns, others move to and fro with the speed of comets. From time to time, at Rome or elsewhere, a patron rises, who assembles all the wandering stars around himself. His death disperses the group; or accidents rouse jealousy among them, and cause secessions from the circle. Then fresh combinations have to be considered. In no one city can we trace firm chronological progression, or discover the fixed local character which justifies our dividing the history of Italian painting by its schools. To avoid repetition, and to preserve an even current of narration amid so much that is shifting, is almost impossible.

Some method may be introduced by sketching briefly at the outset the principal periods through which the humanistic movement passed. Though to a certain extent arbitrary, these periods mark distinct moments in an evolution uniform in spite of its complexity.

The first, starting with Petrarch, and including the lives and labours of those men he personally influenced, has been traced in a preceding chapter. This was the age of inspiration and discovery, when the enthusiasm for antiquity was generated and the remnants of the classics were accumulated. The second may be described as the age of arrangement and translation. The first great libraries were founded in this period; the study of Greek was pursued in earnest, and the Greek authors were rendered into Latin. Round Cosimo de' Medici at Florence, Alfonso the Magnanimous at Naples, and Nicholas V. in Rome the leaders of the Renaissance at this time converge. The third is the age of academies. The literary republic, formed during the first and second periods, now gathers into coteries, whereof the Platonic Academy at Florence, that of Pontanus at Naples, that of Pomponius Lætus in Rome, and that of Aldus Manutius at Venice are the most important. Scholarship begins to exhibit a marked improvement in all that concerns style and taste. At the same time Italian erudition reaches its maximum in Poliziano. Externally this third period is distinguished by the rapid spread of printing and the consequent downfall of the humanists as a class. In the fourth period we notice a gradual decline of learning; æsthetic and stylistic scholarship begins to claim exclusive attention. This is the age of the purists, over whom Bembo exercises the sway of a dictator, while the Court of Leo X. furnishes the most brilliant assemblage of literati in Europe. Erudition, properly so called, is now upon the point of being transplanted beyond the Alps, and the Revival of Learning closes for the historian of Italy.

Although the essential feature of this subject is variety, and though

each city of Italy contributed its quota to the sum of culture, attention has now to be directed in a special sense on Florence. Nothing is more obvious to the student who has mastered the first difficulties caused by the intricacy of Italian history, than the fact that all the mental force of the nation was generated in Tuscany, and radiated thence, as from a centre of vital heat and light, over the rest of the peninsula. This is true of the fine arts no less than of Italian poetry, of the revival of learning as well as of the origin of science. From the republics of Tuscany, and from Florence in particular, proceeded the impulse and the energy which led to fruitful results in all of these departments. In proportion as Florence continued to absorb the neighbouring free States into herself, her intellectual pre-eminence became the more unquestionable. Arezzo, Volterra, Cortona, Montepulciano, Prato, and Pistoja were but rivulets feeding the stream of Florentine industry.

What caused this superiority of the Tuscans is a problem as difficult to solve as the similar problem with respect to Athens among the states of Greece. Something may no doubt be attributed to ethnology, and something to climate. Much, again, was due to the purity of a dialect which retained more of native energy and literary capacity, and which had suffered less from barbarian admixtures than the dialects of northern or of southern Italy. The conquest of the Lombards passed the Tuscans by, nor did feudal institutions take the same root in the valley of the Arno which they struck in the kingdom of Naples. The cities of Tuscany were therefore less exposed to foreign influences than the rest of Italy. While they pursued their course of internal growth in comparative tranquillity, they were better fitted for reviving the past glories of Latin civilisation upon its native soil. The free institutions of the Florence commonwealth must also be taken into account.

In Florence, if anywhere in Italy, existed the conditions under which a republic of letters and of culture could be formed. The aristocracy of Naples indulged the semi-savage tastes of territorial *seigneurs*; the nobles of Rome delighted in feats of arms and shared their wealth with retinues of *bravi*; the great families of Umbria, Romagna, and the March followed the profession of *condottieri*; the Lombards were downtrodden by their Despots and deprived of individual freedom; the Genoese developed into little better than traders and sea-robbers; the Siennese, divided by the factions of their *Monti*, had small leisure or common public feeling left for study. Florence meanwhile could boast a population of burghers noble by taste and culture, owing less to ancestry than to personal eminence, devoting their energies to civic ambition worthy of the Romans, and to mental activity which reminds us of the ancient Greeks. Between the people and this aristocracy of wealth and intellect there was at Florence no division like that which separated the Venetian *gentiluomini* from the *cittadini*. The so-called *nobili* and *popolani* did not, as in Venice, form a caste apart, bound to the service of a tyrannous state-system. The very mobility which proved the ultimate source of disruption and of ruin to the commonwealth, aided the intel-

lectual development of Florence. Stagnation and oppression were alike unknown. Here, therefore, and here alone, was created a public capable instinctively of comprehending what is beautiful in art and humane in letters, a race of craftsmen and of scholars who knew that their labours could not fail to be appreciated, and a class of patrons who sought no better bestowal of their wealth than on those arts and sciences which dignify the life of man. The Florentines, moreover, as a nation, were animated with the strongest sense of the greatness and the splendour of Florence. Like the Athenians of old, they had no warmer passion than their love for their city. However much we may deplore the rancorous dissensions which from time to time split up the commonwealth into parties, the remorseless foreign policy which destroyed Pisa, the political meanness of the Medici, and the base egotism of the *ottimati*, the fact remains that, æsthetically and intellectually, Florence was 'a city glorious,' a realised ideal of culture and humanity for all the rest of Italy, and, through Italian influence in general, for modern Europe and for us.

What makes the part played by Florence in the history of learning the more remarkable is, that the chiefs of the political factions were at the same time the leaders of intellectual progress. Rinaldo degli Albizzi and Cosimo de' Medici, while opposed as antagonists in a duel to the death upon the stage of the republic, vied with each other in the patronage they extended to men of letters. Rinaldo was himself no mean scholar; and he chose one of the greatest men of the age, Tommaso da Sarzana, to be tutor to his children. Of Palla degli Strozzi's services in the cause of Greek learning I have already spoken in the second chapter of this volume. Besides the invitation which he caused to be sent to Manuel Chrysoloras, he employed his wealth and influence in providing books necessary for the prosecution of Hellenic studies. 'Messer Palla,' says Vespasiano, 'sent to Greece for countless volumes, all at his own cost. The "Cosmography" of Ptolemy, together with the picture made to illustrate it, the "Lives" of Plutarch, the works of Plato, and very many other writings of philosophers, he got from Constantinople. The "Politics" of Aristotle were not in Italy until Messer Palla sent for them; and when Messer Lionardo of Arezzo translated them, he had the copy from his hands.'<sup>1</sup> In the same spirit of practical generosity Palla degli Strozzi devoted his leisure and his energies to the improvement of the *studio pubblico* at Florence, giving it that character of humane culture which it retained throughout the age of the Renaissance.<sup>2</sup> To him, again, belongs the glory of having first collected books for the express purpose of founding a public library. This project had occupied the mind of Petrarch, and its utility had been recognised by Coluccio de' Salutati,<sup>3</sup> but no one had as yet arisen to accomplish it. 'Being passionately fond of literature, Messer Palla always kept copyists in his own

<sup>1</sup> Vespasiano, p. 272.

<sup>2</sup> Vespasiano, p. 273.

<sup>3</sup> See Voigt, p. 202.

house and outside it, of the best who were in Florence, both for Greek and Latin books; and all the books he could find he purchased, on all subjects, being minded to found a most noble library in Santa Trinità, and to erect there a most beautiful building for the purpose. He wished that it should be open to the public, and he chose Santa Trinità because it was in the centre of Florence, a site of great convenience to everybody. His disasters supervened, and what he had designed he could not execute.<sup>4</sup>

The calamities alluded to by Vespasiano may be briefly told. Palla degli Strozzi, better fitted by nature for study than for party warfare, was one of the richest of the merchant princes of Florence. In the *catasto* of 1427 his property was valued at one-fifth more than that returned by Giovanni, then the chief of the Medicean family; and the extraordinary tax (*gravezza*) imposed upon it reached the sum of 800 florins.<sup>5</sup> During the conflict for power carried on between the Albizzi and the Medici he strove to preserve a neutral attitude; but after Cosimo's return from exile, in 1434, the presence of so powerful and rich a leader in the State seemed dangerous to the Medicean party. It was their policy to annihilate all greatness but their own, and to reduce the Florentines to slavery by creating a body of dependents and allies whose interests should be bound up with their own supremacy.<sup>6</sup> Palla degli Strozzi was accordingly banished to Padua for ten years, nor, at the expiration of this period, was he suffered to return to Florence. He died in exile, separated from his children, who shared the same fate in other parts of Italy, while Florence lost the services of the most enlightened of her sons.<sup>7</sup> Amid the many tribulations of his latter years Palla continued to derive comfort from study. John Argyropoulos was his guest at Padua, where the collection of books and the cultivation of Greek learning went on with no less vigour than at Florence.

The work begun by Palla degli Strozzi at Florence was ably continued by his enemy Cosimo de' Medici. Though the historian cannot respect this man, whose mean and selfish ambition undermined the liberties of his native city, there is no doubt that he deserves the credit of a prudent and munificent Mæcenæ. No Italian of his epoch combined zeal for learning and generosity in all that could advance the interests of arts and letters, more characteristically, with political corruption and cynical egotism. Early in life Cosimo entered his father's house of business, and developed a rare faculty for finance. This faculty he afterwards employed in the administration of the State, as well as in the augmentation of the riches of his family by trade. As he gained political importance, he made it his prime object to place out monies in the hands of needy citizens, and to involve the public affairs of Florence with his own commerce by means of loans and other expedients. He not only

<sup>4</sup> Vespasiano, p. 275.    <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p. 276.

<sup>6</sup> See Von Reumont, vol. i. pp. 147-153, for the cruel treatment of the Albizzi and other leading citizens.

<sup>7</sup> See Vespasiano, pp. 283-287.

attached individuals by debts and obligations to his person, but he also rendered it difficult to control the State expenditure without regard to his private bank. Few men have better understood the value of money in the acquisition of power, or the advantage of so using it that jealousy should not be roused by personal display. 'Envy,' he remarked, 'is a plant you must not water.' Accordingly, while he spent large sums on public works, he declined Brunelleschi's sumptuous project for a palace, on the score that such a dwelling was more fitted for a prince than a citizen. In his habits he was temperate and simple. Games of hazard he abhorred, and found his recreation in the company of learned men. Sometimes, but rarely, he played at chess. Contemporaries recorded how, like an ancient Roman, he rose early in the morning to prune his own pear trees and to plant his vines. In all things he preferred the reality to the display of power and riches. While wielding the supreme authority of Florence, he seemed intent upon the dull work of the counting-house. Other men were put forward in the execution of designs that he had planned; and this policy of ruling the State by cat's-paws was followed so consistently, that at the end of his life his influence was threatened by the very instruments he had created. At the same time he exercised virtual despotism with a pitiless tenacity unsurpassed by the Visconti. The cruelty with which he pushed the Albizzi to their ruin, prolonged the exile of Palla degli Strozzi, reduced Giannozzo Manetti to beggary, and oppressed his rivals in general with forced loans—using taxation like a poignard, to quote a phrase from Guicciardini—is enough to show that only prudence caused him to refrain from violence.<sup>8</sup> A cold and calculating policy, far-sighted, covert, and secretive, governed all the measures he took for fastening his family on Florence. The result was that the roots of the Medici, while they seemed to take hold slowly, struck deep; you might fancy they were nowhere, just because they had left no part unpenetrated. The Republic, like Gulliver in Lilliput, was tied down by a thousand threads, each almost imperceptible, but so varied in quality and so subtly interwoven that to escape from the network was impossible.

Much of the influence acquired by Cosimo, and transmitted to his descendants, was due to sympathy with the intellectual movement of the age. He had received a solid education; and though he was not a Greek scholar, his mind was open to the interests which in the fifteenth century absorbed the Florentines. He collected manuscripts, gems, coins, and inscriptions, employing the resources of his banking house and engaging his commercial agents in this work. Painters and sculptors, no less than scholars and copyists, found in him a liberal patron. At the death of his son Piero the treasures of the Casa Medici, not counting plate and costly furniture, were valued at 30,000 golden florins.<sup>9</sup> The

<sup>8</sup> Manetti's obligations to the commune were raised by arbitrary impositions to the enormous sum of 135,000 golden florins. He was broken in his trade and forced to live on charity in exile.

<sup>9</sup> See Von Reumont, vol. ii. p. 175.



sums of money spent by him in building were enormous. It was reckoned that, one year with another, he disbursed from 15,000 to 18,000 golden florins annually in edifices for the public use.<sup>10</sup> Of these the most important were the Convent of S. Marco, which altogether cost about 70,000 florins; S. Lorenzo, which cost another 40,000; and the Abbey of Fiesole. On his own palace he expended 60,000 florins, while the building of his villas at Careggi and Cafaggiuolo implied a further large expenditure. Not a shilling of this money was wasted; for while Cosimo avoided the reproach of personal extravagance, he gave work to multitudes of labourers, who received their wages regularly every Saturday at his office. To this free use of wealth in the employment of artisans may be ascribed the popularity of the Medici with the lower classes, which was more than once so useful to them at a perilous turn of fortune.

Comprehending the conditions under which tyranny might be successfully practised in the fifteenth century, Cosimo attached great value to this generosity. He used, in later life, to regret that 'he had not begun to spend money upon public works ten years earlier than he did.'<sup>11</sup> Every costly building that bore his name, each library he opened to the public, and all the donations lavished upon scholars served the double purpose of cementing the despotism of his house and of gratifying his personal enthusiasm for culture. Superstition mingled with these motives of the tyrant and the dilettante. Knowing that much of his wealth had been ill-gotten, he besought the Pope, Eugenius, to indicate a proper way of restitution. Eugenius advised him to spend 10,000 florins on the Convent of S. Marco. Thereupon Cosimo laid out considerably more than four times that sum, adding the famous Marcian Library, and treating the new foundation of the Osservanza, one of the Pope's favourite crotchets, with more than princely liberality.<sup>12</sup>

Of his generosity to men of letters the most striking details are recorded. When Niccolo de' Niccoli ruined himself by buying books, Cosimo opened for him an unlimited credit with the Medicean bank. The cashiers received orders to honour the old scholar's drafts; and in this way Niccolo drew 500 ducats for his private needs.<sup>13</sup> Tommaso Parentucelli was treated with no less magnificence. As Bishop of Bologna, soon after his patron Albergati's death, he found himself with very meagre revenues and no immediate prospect of preferment. Yet the expenses of his station were considerable, and he had occasion to request a loan from the Medici. Cosimo issued a circular letter to his correspondents, engaging them to supply Tommaso with what sums of

<sup>10</sup> Vespasiano, p. 257.

<sup>11</sup> Vespasiano, p. 257.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* p. 252. Cosimo ordered his clerks to honour all drafts presented with the signature of one of the chief brethren of the convent. 'Aveva ordinato al banco, che tutti i danari, che gli fussino tratti per polizza d' uno religioso de primi del convento, gli pagasse, e mettessegli a suo conto, e fussino che somma si volessino.'

<sup>13</sup> Vespasiano, pp. 264, 475.

money he might want.<sup>14</sup> When the Bishop of Bologna assumed the tiara, with the name of Nicholas V., he rewarded Cosimo by making him his banker: and the Jubilee bringing 100,000 ducats into the Papal treasury, the obligation was repaid a hundredfold.<sup>15</sup>

The chief benefit conferred by Cosimo de' Medici on learning was the accumulation and the housing of large public libraries. During his exile (Oct. 3, 1433—Oct. 1, 1434) he built the Library of S. Giogio Maggiore at Venice, and after his return to Florence he formed three separate collections of MSS. While the hall of the library of S. Marco was in process of construction, Niccolo de' Niccoli died, in 1437, bequeathing his 800 MSS., valued at 6,000 golden florins, to sixteen trustees. Among these were Cosimo and Lorenzo de' Medici, Ambrogio Traversari, Lionardo Bruni, Carlo Marsuppini, Poggio Bracciolini, Gianozzo Manetti, and Franco Sacchetti. At the same time the estate of Niccolo was compromised by heavy debts. These debts Cosimo cancelled, obtaining in exchange the right to dispose of the library. In 1441 the hall of the convent was finished. Four hundred of Niccolo's MSS. were placed there, with this inscription upon each: *Ex hereditate doctissimi viri Nicolai de Nicolis de Florentiâ*. Tommaso Parentucelli made a catalogue at Cosimo's request, in which he not only noted the titles of Niccoli's books, but also marked the names of others wanting to complete the collection. This catalogue afterwards served as a guide to the founders of the libraries of Fiesole, Urbino, and Pesaro, and was, says Vespasiano, indispensable to book-collectors.<sup>16</sup> Of the the remaining 400 volumes Cosimo kept some for his own (the Medicean) library, and some he gave to friends. At the same time he spared no pains in adding to the Marcian collection. His agents received instructions to buy codices, while Vespasiano and Fra Giuliano Lapaccini were employed in copying rare MSS. As soon as Cosimo had finished building the Abbey of Fiesole, he set about providing this also with a library suited to the wants of learned ecclesiastics. Of the method he pursued, Vespasiano, who acted as his agent, has transmitted the following account.<sup>17</sup>—"One day, when I was in his room, he said to be, "What plan can you recommend for the formation of this library?" I answered that to buy the books would be impossible, since they could not be purchased. "What, then, do you propose?" he added. I told him that they must be copied. He then asked if I would undertake the business. I replied that I was willing. He bade me begin at my leisure, saying that he left all to me; and for the monies wanted day by day, he ordered that Don Argangelo, at that time prior of the monastery, should draw cheques upon his bank, which should be honoured. After beginning the collection, since it was his will that it should be finished with all speed possible, and money was not lacking, I soon engaged forty-five copyists,

<sup>14</sup> Vespasiano, pp. 29, 264.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 34, 265.

<sup>16</sup> See Vespasiano's *Life of Nicholas V.* p. 26.

<sup>17</sup> *Vita de Cosimo*, p. 254.

and in twenty-two months provided two hundred volumes, following the admirable list furnished by Pope Nicholas V.' The two libraries thus formed by Cosimo for the Convents of S. Marco and Fiesole, together with his own private collections, constitute the oldest portion of the present Laurentian Library. On the title-pages of many venerable MSS. may still be read inscriptions, testifying to the munificence of the Medici, and calling upon pious students to remember the souls of their benefactors in their prayers<sup>18</sup>—*Orato itaque lector ut gloria et divitiæ sint in domo ejus justitia ejus et maneat in sæculum sæculi.*

Cosimo's zeal for learning was not confined to the building of libraries or to book-collecting. His palace formed the centre of a literary and philosophical society, which united all the wits of Florence and the visitors who crowded to the capital of culture. Vespasiano expressly states that 'he was always the father and benefactor of those who showed any excellence.'<sup>19</sup> Distinguished by versatility of tastes and comprehensive intellect, he formed his own opinion of the men of eminence with whom he came in contact, and conversed with each upon his special subject. 'When giving audience to a scholar, he discoursed concerning letters; in the company of theologians he showed his acquaintance with theology, a branch of learning always studied by him with delight. So also with regard to philosophy. Astrologers found him well versed in their science, for he somewhat lent faith to astrology and employed it on certain private occasions. Musicians in like manner perceived his mastery of music, wherein he much delighted. The same was true about sculpture and painting; both of these arts he understood completely, and showed great favour to all worthy craftsmen. In architecture he was a consummate judge, for without his opinion and advice no building was begun or carried to completion.'<sup>20</sup>

The discernment of character, possessed by Cosimo in a very high degree, not only enabled him to extend enlightened patronage to arts and letters, but also to provide for the future needs of erudition. Stimulated by the presence of the Greeks who crowded Florence during the sitting of the Council in 1438, he formed a plan for encouraging Hellenic studies. It was he who founded the Platonic Academy, and educated Marsilio Ficino, the son of his physician, for the special purpose of interpreting Greek philosophy. Ficino, in a letter to Lorenzo de Medici, observes that during twelve years he had conversed with Cosimo on matters of philosophy, and always found him as acute in reasoning as he was prudent and powerful in action. 'I owe to Plato much, to Cosimo no less. He realised for me the virtues of which Plato gave me the conception.' Thus the man whose political cynicism is enshrined in such apophthegms as these:—'A few ells of scarlet would fill Florence with citizens;' 'You cannot govern a State with paternosters;' 'Better the city ruined than the city lost to us'—must, by his relations to scholars

<sup>18</sup> See Von Reumont, vol. i. p. 578.

<sup>19</sup> *Vita de Cosimo*, p. 266.

<sup>20</sup> Condensed from Vespasiano, p. 258.

and his enthusiasm for culture, still command our admiration and respect.

Among the friends of Cosimo, to whose personal influence at Florence the Revival of Learning owed a vigorous impulse, Niccolo de Niccoli claims our earliest attention.<sup>21</sup> The part he took in promoting Greek studies has been already noticed, and we have seen that his private library formed the nucleus of the Marcian collection. Of the eight hundred volumes bequeathed to his executors, the majority had been transcribed by his own hand; for he was assiduous in this labour, and plumed himself upon his skill in cursive as well as printed character.<sup>22</sup> His whole fortune was expended long before his death in buying manuscripts or procuring copies from a distance. 'If he heard of any book in Greek or Latin not to be had in Florence, he spared no cost in getting it; the number of the Latin books which Florence owes entirely to his generosity cannot be reckoned.'<sup>23</sup> Great, therefore, must have been the transports of delight with which he welcomed on one occasion a manuscript containing seven tragedies of Sophocles, six of Æschylus, and the 'Argonautica' of Apollonius Rhodius.<sup>24</sup> Nor was he only eager in collecting for his own use. He lent his books so freely that, at the moment of his death, two hundred volumes were out on loan;<sup>25</sup> and, when it seemed that Boccaccio's library would perish from neglect, at his own cost he provided substantial wooden cases for it in the Convent of S. Spirito. We must not, however, conclude that Niccolo was a mere copyist and collector. On the contrary, he made a point of collating the several MSS. of an author on whose text he was engaged, removed obvious errors, and suggested emendations, helping thus to lay the foundations of modern criticism. His judgment in matters of style was so highly valued that it was usual for scholars to submit their essays to his eyes before they ventured upon publication. Thus Lionardo Bruni sent him his 'Life of Cicero,' calling him 'the censor of the Latin tongue.'<sup>26</sup> Notwithstanding his fine sense of language, Niccolo never appeared before the world of letters as an author. His enemies made the most of this reluctance, averring that he knew his own ineptitude, while his friends referred his silence to an exquisite fastidiousness of taste.<sup>27</sup> It may have been that he remembered the Tacitean epigram on Galba—*omnium consensu capax imperii nisi imperâsset*—and applied it to himself. Certainly his reserve, in an age noteworthy for arrogant display, has tended to confer on him distinction. The position

<sup>21</sup> What follows I have based on Vespasiano's Life of Niccolo. Poggio's Funeral Oration, and his letter to Carlo Aretino on the death of his friend Niccolo, are to the same effect. *Poggii Opera*, pp. 270, 342.

<sup>22</sup> Vespasiano, p. 471. 'Le scriveva di sua mano o di lettera corsiva o formata, che dell' una lettera e dell' altra era bellissimo scrittore.'

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* p. 473.

<sup>24</sup> See a letter of Ambrogio Traversari, quoted by Voigt, p. 155.

<sup>25</sup> Vespasiano, p. 476. Poggio, p. 271.

<sup>26</sup> Vespasiano, pp. 473, 478.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* p. 478. Poggio, p. 343.

he occupied at Florence was that of a literary dictator. All who needed his assistance and advice were received with urbanity. He threw his house open to young men of parts, engaged in disputations with the curious, and provided the ill-educated with teachers. Foreigners from all parts of Italy and Europe paid him visits: 'the strangers who came to Florence at that time, if they missed the opportunity of seeing him at home, thought they had not been in Florence.'<sup>28</sup> The house where he lived was worthy of his refined taste and cultivated judgment; for he had formed a museum of antiquities—inscriptions, marbles, coins, vases, and engraved gems. There he not only received students and strangers, but conversed with sculptors and painters, discussing their inventions as freely as he criticised the essays of the scholars. It is probable that the classicism of Brunelleschi and Donatello, both of whom were among his intimate friends, may be due in part at least to his discourses on the manner of the ancients.<sup>29</sup> Pliny, we know, was one of his favourite authors; for, having heard that a complete codex of the 'Natural Histories' existed at Lübeck, he left no stone unturned till it had been transferred to Florence.<sup>30</sup>

Vespasiano's account of his personal habits presents so vivid a picture that I cannot refrain from translating it at length:—'First of all, he was of a most fair presence; lively, for a smile was ever on his lips; and very pleasant in his talk. He wore clothes of the fairest crimson cloth, down to the ground. He never married, in order that he might not be impeded in his studies. A housekeeper provided for his daily needs. He was above all men the most cleanly in eating, as also in all other things. When he sat at table, he ate from fair antique vases; and, in like manner, all his table was covered with porcelain and other vessels of great beauty. The cup from which he drank was of crystal or of some other precious stone. To see him at table—a perfect model of the men of old—was of a truth a charming sight. He always willed that the napkins set before him should be of the whitest, as well as all the linen. Some might wonder at the many vases he possessed, to whom I answer that things of that sort were neither so highly valued then, nor so much regarded, as they have since become; and Niccolo having friends everywhere, anyone who wished to do him a pleasure would send him marble statues, or antique vases, carvings, inscriptions, pictures from the hands of distinguished masters, and mosaic tablets. He had a most beautiful map, on which all the parts and cities of the world were marked; others of Italy and Spain, all painted. Florence could not show a house more full of ornaments than his, or one that had in it a greater number of graceful objects; so that all who went there found innumerable things of worth to please varieties of taste.' What distinguished Niccolo was the combination of refinement and humane breeding with open-handed

<sup>28</sup> Vespasiano, p. 477.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* p. 479.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* p. 474.

generosity and devotion to the cause of culture. He knew how to bring forward men of promise, and to place them in positions of eminence. Yet, in return for benefits conferred, he exacted more compliance than could be expected from the haughty and unbending temper of distinguished scholars. Opposition and contradiction roused his jealousy and barbed his caustic speech with sarcasm. Chrysoloras and Guarino, Aurispa and Filelfo, after visiting Florence at his invitation, found the city unendurable through the opposition raised by Niccolo against them.

Among the men of ability who adorned Florence at this period, no one stands forth with a more distinguished personality than Lionardo Bruni. In his boyhood at Arezzo, where his parents occupied a humble position, he used, as he tells us in his 'Commentaries',<sup>31</sup> to gaze on Petrarch's portrait, fervently desiring that he might win like laurels in the field of scholarship. At first, however, being poor and of no reputation, he was forced to apply his talents to the study of the law. From these uncongenial labours the patronage of Salutato and the influence of Chrysoloras<sup>32</sup> saved him. Having begun to write for the public, his fame as a Latinist soon spread so wide that he was appointed Apostolic Secretary to the Roman Curia. After sharing the ill fortunes of John XXIII. at Constance, and serving under Martin V. at Florence, he was appointed to the Chancery of the Republic in 1427, a post which he occupied until his death in 1443. His biography, therefore, illustrates all that has been said concerning the employment of humanists in high offices of Church and State. His diplomatic letters were regarded as models in that kind of composition, and his public speeches, carefully prepared beforehand, were compared with those of Pericles. Florence was crowded with the copyists who multiplied his MSS., dispersing them all over Europe; and when he walked abroad, a numerous train of scholars and of foreigners attended him.<sup>33</sup> He moved with gravity and majesty of person, wearing the red robes of a Florentine burgher, using few words, but paying marked courtesy to men of wealth. Among the compositions which secured his reputation should first be mentioned the Latin 'History of Florence,' a work unique in its kind at that time in Italy.<sup>34</sup> The grateful Republic rewarded their chancellor by bestowing upon him the citizenship of Florence, and by exempting the author and his children from taxation. The high value at which Bruni rated his own Latin scholarship is proved by his daring to restore the second Decade of Livy in a compilation entitled 'De Primo Bello Punico.' His mediæval erudition was exercised in the history of the Gothic invasion of Italy, while his more elegant style found ample scope in Latin Lives of Cicero and Aristotle, in a book of Commentaries on his own times, and in ten volumes of Collected Letters. These original works were

<sup>31</sup> Muratori, xix. p. 917. 'Erat in ipso cubiculo picta Francisci Petrarchæ imago, quam ego quotidie aspiciens, incredibili ardore studiorum ejus incendebar.'

<sup>32</sup> See above, pp. 377, 380.

<sup>33</sup> See Vespasiano, p. 436.

<sup>34</sup> See Vol. I., *Age of Despots*, pp. 138-140.

possibly of less importance than Bruni's translations from the Greek, which passed in his own age for models of sound scholarship as well as pure Latinity. The erudition of the fifteenth century had to thank his industry for critical renderings of Aristotle's 'Ethics,' 'Politics,' and 'Economics.'<sup>35</sup> The 'Politics' were dedicated to the Earl of Worcester, and the autograph was sent to England. Some delay in the acknowledgment of so magnificent a tribute of respect caused the haughty scholar to transfer the honour of his dedication to Eugenius IV. He cancelled his first preface, substituted a new one, and received the praise and thanks he sought, in plenty from his Holiness.<sup>36</sup> Of Plato Bruni translated the 'Phædo,' 'Crito,' and 'Apology,' the 'Phædrus' and the 'Gorgias,' together with the 'Epistles.' To these versions must be added six Lives of Plutarch and two Orations of Demosthenes. Nor have we thus by any means exhausted the list of Bruni's Latin compositions, which included controversial writings, invectives, moral essays, orations, and tracts on literary or antiquarian topics. If we consider that, in the midst of these severe labours, and under the pressure of his public engagements, he still found time to compose Italian Lives of Dante and Petrarch, we shall understand the admiration universally expressed by his contemporaries for his comprehensive talents, and share their gratitude for services so numerous in the cause of learning. When Messer Lionardo died in 1443, the priors decreed him a public funeral, 'after the manner of the ancients.' His corpse was clothed in dark silk, and on his breast was laid a copy of the Florentine History. Thus attired, he passed in state to S. Croce, where Giannozzo Manetti, in the presence of the Signory, the foreign ambassadors, and the Court of Pope Eugenius, pronounced a funeral oration, and placed the laurel crown upon his head.<sup>37</sup> The monument beneath which Messer Lionardo's bones repose is an excellent specimen of Florentine sepulchral statuary, executed by Bernardo Rossellino.

Facing Bruni's tomb in S. Croce is that of Carlo Aretino, wrought with subtler art and in a richer style by Desiderio da Settignano. Messer Carlo, who succeeded Bruni in the Chancery of the Republic, shared during his lifetime, as well as in the public honours paid him at his death, very similar fortunes. His family name was Marsuppini, and he was born of a good family in Arezzo. Having come to Florence while a youth to study Greek, he fell under the notice of Niccolo de' Niccoli, who introduced him to the Medicean family, and procured him an engagement at a high salary from the Uffiziali dello Studio. At the time when he began to lecture, Eugenius was holding his Court at Florence. The cardinals and nephews of the Pope, attended by foreign ambassadors, and followed by the apostolic secretaries, mingled with burghers of Florence and students from a distance round the desk of the young scholar. Carlo's reading was known to be extensive, and his memory

<sup>35</sup> These last were then thought genuine.

<sup>36</sup> Vespasiano, p. 436.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid. Vita di Manetti*, p. 452. Manetti was himself a prior at this time.



was celebrated as prodigious. Yet on the occasion of this first lecture he far surpassed all that was expected of him. 'Before a crowd of learned men,' says Vespasiano, 'he gave a great proof of his memory, for neither Greeks nor Romans had an author from whom he did not quote.'<sup>38</sup> Filelfo, who was also lecturing in Florence at the time, had the mortification of seeing the larger portion of his audience transfer themselves to Marsuppini. This wound to his vanity he never forgave. Through the influence of Lorenzo de' Medici (Cosimo's younger brother), Carlo Marsuppini was first made Apostolic Secretary, and then promoted to the Chancery of Florence. He was grave in manner, taciturn in speech, and much given to melancholy. His contemporaries regarded him as a man of no religion, and he was said to have died without confession or communion.<sup>39</sup> This did not prevent his being buried in S. Croce with ceremonies similar to those decreed for Messer Lionardo. Matteo Palmieri pronounced the funeral oration, and placed the laurel on his brows. Marsuppini's contributions to scholarship were chiefly in verse; among these his translations of the 'Batrachomyomachia' and the first book of the 'Iliad' were highly valued.

Matteo Palmieri, who pronounced the funeral oration of Messer Carlo Aretino, sprang from an honourable Florentine stock, and by his own abilities rose to a station of considerable public influence. He is principally famous as the author of a mystical poem called 'Città di Vita,' which, though it was condemned for its heretical opinions, obtained from Ficinus for its author the title of *Poeta Theologicus*. To discuss the circumstances under which this allegory in the style of Dante was composed, the secrecy in which it was involved until the poet's death, and the relation of Palmieri's views to heresies in vogue at Florence, belongs to a future section of my work.<sup>40</sup> He claims a passing notice here among the humanists who acquired high place and honour by the credit of his eloquence and style.

Giannozzo Manetti belonged to an illustrious house, and in his youth, like other well-born Florentines, was trained for mercantile affairs.<sup>41</sup> At the age of five-and-twenty he threw off parental control, and gave himself entirely to letters. So obstinate was his industry in the acquisition of knowledge, that he allowed himself only five hours of sleep, and spent the rest of his life in study. During nine whole years he never crossed the Arno, but remained within the walls of his house and garden, which communicated with the Convent of S. Spirito. Being passionately fond of disputation, he sought his chief amusement there in the debating society founded by Marsigli. Ambrogio Traversar was his master in Greek. Latin he had no difficulty in acquiring, and soon

<sup>38</sup> *Vita di Carlo d' Arezzo*, p. 440.

<sup>39</sup> See Tiraboschi, tom. vi. p. 1094.

<sup>40</sup> See Vespasiano, p. 500. Tiraboschi, vol. vi. p. 678. App. iii. to vol. v. of this work.

<sup>41</sup> The sources for Manetti's Life are Vespasiano and an anonymous Latin biography in Muratori. Besides the small Life of Vespasiano in his *Vite d' Uomini Illustri*, I have had recourse to his *Comentario della Vita di Gianozzo Manetti*, Turin, 1862.

gained such facility in its exercise that even Lionardo Bruni is said to have envied his fluency. He was not, however, contented with these languages, and in order to perfect himself in Hebrew he kept a Jew in his own house.<sup>42</sup> When he had acquired sufficient familiarity with Hebrew, he turned the arms supplied him by his tutors against their heresies, basing his arguments upon such interpretations of texts as his superior philology suggested to him. The great work of his literary leisure was a polemical discourse 'Contra Judæos et Gentes,' for, unlike Marsuppini, he placed his erudition solely at the service of the Christian faith. Another fruit of his Hebrew studies was a new translation of the Psalms from the original.

Manetti was far from being a mere student. During the best years of his life he was continually employed as ambassador to the Republic at Venice, Naples, Rome, and other Courts of Italy. He administered the government of Pescia, Pistoja, and Scarparia in times of great difficulty, winning a singular reputation for probity and justice. On all occasions of state his eloquence made him indispensable to the Signory, while the lists of his writings include numerous speeches upon varied topics addressed to potentates and princes throughout Italy.<sup>43</sup> There is a curious story related in his Life, which illustrates the importance attached at this time to public speaking. After the coronation of the Emperor Frederick III., the Florentines sent fifteen ambassadors, including Manetti, attended by the Chancellor Carlo Aretino, to congratulate him. Manetti was a Colleague of the Signory, and on him would therefore have naturally fallen the fulfilment of the task, had not this honour been conferred, by private machinations of the Medicean family, on Carlo. The Chancellor duly delivered a prepared oration, which was answered by Æneas Sylvius in the name of the Emperor. Some topics raised in this reply required rejoinder from the Florentines; but Messer Carlo declared himself unable to speak without previous study. To be forced to hold their tongues before the Emperor and all his suite was a bitter humiliation to the men of Florence. How could they return home and confess that the rhetoric of their Chancellor had been silenced by a witty secretary? In their sore distress they besought Manetti to help them; whereupon he rose and delivered an extempore oration. 'When it was finished,' says Vespasiano,<sup>44</sup> 'all competent judges who understood Latin, and could follow it, declared that Messer Giannozzi's extempore speech was superior to that which Messer Carlo had prepared.'

The Latin Life of Manetti contains innumerable instances of the

<sup>42</sup> 'Tenne in casa dua Greci et uno Ebreo che s'era fatto Cristiano, et non voleva che il Greco parlasse con lui se non in greco, et il simile il Ebreo in ebreo.'—*Comentario*, p. 11.

<sup>43</sup> 'Se ignuna cosa difficile o cura disperata, la davano a Messer Gianozo.'—*Ibid.* p. 22.

<sup>44</sup> *Vita di Gianozo Manetti*, p. 462. Compare Burckhardt, p. 182. There is another story, told in the *Comentario*, of Manetti's speaking before Alfonso at Naples. The King remained so quiet that he did not even brush the flies from his face. P. 30.

miracles wrought by his rhetoric.<sup>45</sup> Yet we should err if we imagined that the speeches pronounced upon solemn occasions, by even such illustrious orators as Manetti or Pius II., were marked by any of the nobler qualities of eloquence.<sup>46</sup> They consist of commonplaces freely interspersed with historical examples and voluminous quotations. Without charm, without originality, they survive as monuments of the enthusiasm of that age for classic erudition, and of the patience with which popes and princes lent their ears for two or three hours at a stretch to the self-complacent mouthings of a pompous pedant.

Giannozzo Manetti became at last so great a power in Florence that he excited the jealousy of the Medicean party. They ruined him by the imposition of extravagant taxes, and he was obliged to end his life an exile from his native land.<sup>47</sup> Florence never behaved worse to a more blameless citizen; for Manetti, by his cheerful acceptance of public burdens, by his prudence in the discharge of weighty offices, by the piety and sobriety of his private life, by his vast acquirements, and by the single-hearted zeal with which he burned for learning, had proved himself the model of such men as might have saved the State, if safety had been possible. He retired to the Court of Nicholas V., who had previously named him Apostolic Secretary; and on the death of that Pope he sought a final refuge with Alfonso at Naples.<sup>48</sup> There he devoted himself entirely to literature, translating the whole of the New Testament and the ethical treatises of Aristotle into Latin, and carrying his great controversial work against the Jews and Gentiles onwards to completion.

Few men deserve a higher place on the muster-roll of Italian worthies than Manetti. He was free from many vices of the Renaissance; his piety and morality remaining untainted by the contact with antiquity. Nor did he sink the citizen in the student. His learning was varied and profound. Instead of applying himself to Greek and Latin scholarship alone, he mastered Hebrew, and sought to acquire a comprehensive grasp of all the knowledge of the ancient world. At the same time he lived in constant sympathy with his age, sharing its delight in rhetorical displays and wordy disputations, and furthering the diffusion of knowledge by his toil as a translator. It may well be wondered how it happens that a man in many points akin to Pico should have fallen so far short of him in fame. The explanation lies in this: Manetti was deficient in all that elevates mere learning to the rank of art. His Latin style was tedious; his thoughts were commonplace. When the influence of his voice and person passed away, nothing remained to prove his eloquence but ill-digested facts and ill-applied citations. Still the work which he effected in his day was good, and the place he held was honour-

<sup>45</sup> Muratori, vol. xx.

<sup>46</sup> For Pius II.'s reputation see Burckhardt, p. 182.

<sup>47</sup> Vespasiano, p. 465. Muratori, xx. 600.

<sup>48</sup> Alfonso gave him a pension of 900 scudi. He wrote a history of his life and deeds.

able. Posterity may be grateful to him as one of the most active pioneers of modern culture.

A man of different stamp and calling claims attention next. Ambrogio Traversari was far from sharing the neo-pagan impulse of the classical revival; yet he owed political influence and a high place among the leaders of his age to humanistic enthusiasm. Born in Romagna, and admitted while yet a child into the Convent degli Angeli at Florence, he gave early signs of his capacity for literature. At a time when knowledge of Greek was still a rare title to distinction,<sup>40</sup> Ambrogio mastered the elements of the language and studied the Greek Fathers in the original. His cell became the meeting-place of learned men, where Cosimo and Lorenzo de' Medici, the stately Bruni and the sombre Marsuppini, joined with caustic Niccoli and lively Poggio in earnest conversation. His voluminous correspondence connected him with students in all parts of Italy; nor was there any important discovery of MSS. or plan for library or university in which he did not take his part among the first.

It seemed as though he were destined to pursue a peaceful student's life among his books; and for this career nature had marked out the little, meagre, lively, and laborious man. To be eminent in scholarship, however, and to avoid the burdens of celebrity, was impossible in that age. Eugenius IV., while resident in Florence, was so impressed with his literary eminence and strength of character that he made him General of the Camaldolese Order in 1431; and from this time forward Traversari's life was divided between public duties, for which he was scarcely fitted, and private studies that absorbed his deepest interests. He presented the curious spectacle of a monk distracted between the scruples of the cloister and the wider claims of humanism, who showed one mind to his Order and another to his literary friends. He made a point of never citing heathen poets in his writings, as though the verses of Homer or of Virgil were inconsistent with the sobriety of a Christian; yet his anxiety to round his style with Ciceronian phrases, and to bequeath models of pure Latinity in his epistles to posterity, proved how much he valued literary graces. Having vowed to consecrate his talents to the services of ecclesiastical learning, he undertook the translation of Diogenes Laertius, at Cosimo's request, with reluctance, and performed the task with bitter self-bemoaning. In his person we witness the conflict of the humanistic spirit with ecclesiastical tradition—a conflict in which the former was destined to achieve a complete and memorable victory.

These men Niccoli, Bruni, Marsuppini, Manetti, and Traversari—formed the literary oligarchy who surrounded Cosimo de' Medici, and through their industry and influence restored the studies of antiquity at Florence. While they were carrying on the work of revival, each in his own sphere, with impassioned energy, a combination of external circumstances gave fresh impulse to their activity. Eugenius IV.,

<sup>40</sup> Niccolo de' Niccoli, it must be remembered, was not a Grecian. Ambrogio used to insert the Greek words into his transcripts of Latin codices.

having been expelled from Rome in 1434, had fixed his headquarters in Florence, whither in 1438 he transferred the Council which had first been opened at Ferrara for negotiating the union of the Greek and Latin Churches. The Emperor of the East, John Palæologus, surrounded by his theologians and scribes, together with the Pope of Rome, on whom a train of cardinals and secretaries attended, now took up their quarters in the city of the Medici. A temporary building at Santa Maria Novella was erected for the sessions of the Council, and for several months Florence entertained as guests the chiefs of the two great sections of Christendom. Unimportant as were the results, both political and ecclesiastical, of this Council, the meeting of the Eastern and the Western powers in conclave vividly impressed the imagination of the Florentines, and communicated a more than transient impulse to their intellectual energies. Italy was on the eve of becoming not only the depository of Greek learning, but also the sole interpreter of the Greek spirit to the modern world. Fifteen years after the closing of the Council the thread which had connected Byzantium with Athens through an unbroken series of historical traditions was snapped; already it was beginning to be felt in Europe that nothing but the ghost of Greek culture survived upon the shores of the Bosphorus, and that if the genius of antiquity was to illuminate the modern world, the light must dawn in Italy.<sup>50</sup>

The feelings with which the Florentines regarded their Greek guests were strangely mingled. While honouring them as the last scions of the noblest nation of the past, as the authentic teachers of Hellenic learning and the masters of the Attic tongue, they despised their empty vanity, their facile apostasy, their trivial pedantry, their personal absurdities. The long beards, trailing mantles, painted eyebrows, and fantastic head-gear of the Byzantine sophists moved the laughter of the common folk, accustomed to the grave and simple *lucco* of their own burghers. In vain did Vespasiano tell them that this costume descended from august antiquity through fifteen centuries of unchanged fashion.<sup>51</sup> The more educated citizens, again, soon discovered that the erudition of these strangers was but shallow, and that their magnificent pretensions reduced themselves to the power of speaking the emasculated Greek, which formed their mother tongue, with fluency. The truth is that, however necessary the Byzantines were at the very outset of the Revival of Learning, Greek studies owed less to their traditional lore than to the curiosity of Italian scholars. The beggarly elements of grammar, caligraphy, and bibliographical knowledge were supplied by the Greeks; but it was not Chrysoloras even, nor yet Argyropoulos, so much as Ficino and Aldo, Palla degli Strozzi and Cosimo de' Medici, who opened the literature of Athens to the comprehension of the modern world.

<sup>50</sup> See the emphatic words of Poliziano, quoted by Voigt, p. 189, on the revival of extinct Hellenism by the Florentines, and on their fluent command of the Attic idiom.

<sup>51</sup> See the curious passage in the *Vita di Eugenio IV.*, *Papa*, p. 14.

Some exceptions must be made to these remarks; for it is not certain that, without guidance, the Florentines would have made that rapid progress in philosophical studies which contrasts so singularly with their comparative neglect of the Attic dramatists. Gemistos Plethon in particular stands forth as a man who combined real knowledge with natural eloquence, and who materially affected the whole course of the Renaissance by directing the intelligence of the Florentines to Plato. Inasmuch as Plethon's residence in Italy during the session of the Council formed a decisive epoch in the Revival of Learning, to pass him by without some detailed notice would be to omit one of the most interesting episodes in the history of the fifteenth century. At the same time, his biography so well illustrates the state of thought in the Greek Empire at the moment of its fall, as well as the speculations which interested philosophic intellects at that period in Italy, that I trust the following digression will be judged excusable.

Georgios Gemistos was born of noble parents at Byzantium about the year 1355.<sup>52</sup> During a long lifetime, chiefly spent in the Morea, he witnessed all the miseries that racked his country through its lingering agony of a hundred years, and died at last in 1450, just before the final downfall of the Greek Empire. Of his early life little is known beyond the fact that he left Constantinople as a young man in order to study philosophy at Brusa. Brusa and Adrianopolis, at that time the two Western seats of the Mahomedan power, outrivalled Byzantium in culture, while the mental vigour of the Mussulmans was far in advance of that of their effete neighbours. The young Greek, who seems already to have lost his faith in Christianity, was attracted to the Moslem Court by Elissaios, a sage of Jewish birth. From this teacher he learned what then passed for the doctrines of Zoroaster. After quitting Brusa, Gemistos settled at Mistra in the Peloponnese, upon the site of ancient Sparta, where with some interruptions he continued to reside until his death. The Greek Emperor was still nominally lord of the Morea, though the conquests of Frankish Crusaders and the incursions of the Turks had rendered his rule feeble. Gemistos, who enjoyed the confidence of the Imperial House, was made a judge at Mistra, and thus obtained clear insight into the causes of the decadence of the Hellenic race upon its ancient soil. The picture he draws of the anarchy and immorality of the peninsula is frightful. He also professed philosophy, and at the age of thirty-three became a teacher of repute. The views he formed concerning the corruption of the Greek Church and the degradation of the Greek people, combined with his philosophical opinions, inspired him with the visionary ambition of reforming the creed, the ethics, and the political conditions of Hellas on a Pagan basis. There is something ludicrous as well as sad in the spectacle of this sophist, nourishing the vain fancy that he might coin a complete religious sys-

<sup>52</sup> I owe the greater part of the facts presented in this sketch of Gemistos to Fritz Schultze's *Geschichte der Philosophie der Renaissance*, vol. i.

tem, which should supersede Christianity and restore vigour to the decayed body of the Greek Empire. In the dotage of Hellenism Gemistos discovered no new principle of vitality, but returned to the speculative mysticism of the Neo-platonists. Their attempt at a Pagan revival had failed long ago in Alexandria, while force still remained to the Greek race, and while the Christian Church was still comparatively ill-assured. To propose it as a panacea in the year 1400 for the evils of the Empire threatened by the Turks was mere childishness. Perhaps it is doing the sage injustice to treat his system seriously. Charity prompts us to regard it as a plaything invented for the amusement of his leisure hours. Yet nothing can be graver than his own language and that of his disciples.

The work in which he embodied his doctrine was called 'The Laws'—*ἡ τῶν νόμων συγγραφή*, or simply *νόμοι*. It comprised a metaphysical system, the outlines of a new religion, an elaborate psychology and theory of ethics, and a scheme of political administration. According to his notions, there is one Supreme God, Zeus, the absolute and eternal reality, existing as homogeneous and undiscriminated Being, Will, Activity, and Power. Zeus begets everlasting Ideas, or Gods of the second order; and these gods, to whom Gemistos gave the name of Greek divinities, constitute a hierarchy corresponding to the abstract notions of his logic. With the object of harmonising the double series of immortal and mortal existences they are subdivided, by a singularly clumsy contrivance, into genuine and spurious children of Zeus. First among the genuine sons stands Poseidon, the idea of ideas, the logical *summmum genus*, who includes within himself the intellectual universe potentially. Next in rank is Hera, the female deity, created immediately by Zeus, but by a second act, and therefore inferior to Poseidon. These two are the primordial authors of the world as it exists. After them come three series, each of five deities, whereof the first set, including Apollo, Artemis, Hephæstus, Dionysus, and Athena, represent the most general categories. The second set, among whom we find Atlas and Pluto, are the ideas of immortal substance existing for ever in the world of living beings. The third, which reckons among others Hecate and Hestia, are the ideas of immortal substance existing for ever in the inanimate world. Next in the descending order come the spurious offspring of Zeus, or Titans, two of whom, Cronos and Aphrodite, are the ideas respectively of form and matter in things subject to decay and dissolution; while Koré, Pan, and Demeter are the specific ideas of men, beasts, and plants. Hitherto we have been recording the genealogy of divine beings subject to no laws of time or change, who are, in fact, pure thoughts or logical entities. We arrive in the last place at deities of the third degree, the genuine and the spurious children, no longer of Zeus, but of Poseidon, chieftain of the second order of the hierarchy. The planets and the fixed stars constitute the higher of these inferior powers, while the dæmons fill the lowest class of all. At the very bot-



tom of the scale, below the gods of every quality, stand men, beasts, planets, and the inorganic world.

It will be perceived that this scheme is bastard Neo-platonism—a mystical fusion of Greek mythology and Greek logic, whereby the products of speculative analysis are hypostasised as divine persons. Of many difficulties patent in his doctrine Gemistos offered no solution. How, for example, can we ascribe to Zeus the procreation of spurious as well as genuine offspring? It is possible that the philosopher, if questioned on such topics, would have fallen back on the convenient theory of progressively diminished efficacy in the creative act; for though he guards against adopting the hypothesis of emanation, it is clear, from the simile of multiplied reflections in a series of mirrors, which he uses to explain the genealogy of gods, that some such conception modified his views. To point out the insults offered to the ancient myths, whereof he made such liberal and arbitrary use, or to insist upon the folly of the whole conceit, considered as the substance of a creed which should regenerate the world, would be superfluous; nothing can be more grotesque, for instance, than the personification of identity and self-determining motion under the titles of Apollo and Dionysus, nor any confusion more fatal than the attribution of sex to categories of the understanding. The sole merit of the system consists in the classification of notions, the conception of an intellectual hierarchy, descending by interdependent stages from the primordial cause through pure ideas to their copies and material manifestations in the world of things. Dreams of this kind have always haunted the metaphysical imagination, giving rise to hybrids between poetry and logic; and the system of Gemistos may fairly take rank among a hundred similar attempts between the days of Plato and of Hegel.

Such as it was, his metaphysic supplied Gemistos with the basis of a cult, a psychology, a theory of ethics, and a political programme. He founded a sect, and was called by his esoteric followers 'the mystagogue of sublime and celestial dogmas.'<sup>53</sup> They believed that the soul of Plato had been reincarnated in their master, and that the new creed, professed by him, would supersede the faiths existing in the world. Among the most distinguished of these neophytes was the famous Bessarion, who adopted so much at any rate of his teacher's doctrine as rendered him indifferent to the points at issue between the Greek and Latin Churches, when a cardinal's hat was offered as the price of his apostasy. Bessarion, however, was too much of a man of the world to dream that Gemistos would triumph over Christ and Mahomet.<sup>54</sup> While using the language of the mystic, and recording his conviction that Plato's soul, released from the body of Gemistos, had joined the choir of the Olympian deities,<sup>55</sup> it is probable that he was only playing, after the fashion

<sup>53</sup> See Schultze, p. 53.

<sup>54</sup> See Schultze, p. 77, note.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.* p. 107.

of his age, with speculation that amused his fancy though they took no serious hold upon his life. It was a period, we must remember, when scholars affected the manners of the antique world, Latinised their names, and adopted fantastic titles in their academies and learned clubs. At no time of the world's history has this kind of masquerading attained so much earnestness of rather more than half-belief. The attitude assumed by Gemistos and his disciples is, therefore, not without its value for illustrating the intellectual conditions of the earlier Renaissance. Practical religion had but little energy among the educated classes. The interests of the Church were more political than spiritual. Science had not yet asserted her real rights in any sphere of thought. Art and literature, invigorated by the passion for antiquity, meanwhile absorbed the genius of the Italians; and through a dim æsthetic haze the waning lights of Hellas mingled with the dayspring of the modern world.

The most important event of Gemistos's life was the journey which he took to Italy in the train of John Palæologus in 1438. Secretly disliking Christianity in general, and the Latin form of it in particular, he had endeavoured to dissuade the emperor from attending the Council. Now he found himself elected as one of the six champions of the cause of the Greek Church. For the subtle Greek intellect in that dotage of a doomed civilisation, no greater interest survived than could be found in dialectic; and to dispute about the *filioque* of the Christian creed was fair sport, when no chance offered itself of forcing rationalistic Paganism down the throat of popes and cardinals. Therefore it is probable that Gemistos did not find his position at the Council peculiarly irksome, even though he had to listen to reasonings about purgatory and the procession of the Holy Ghost, and to suggest arguments in favour of the Eastern dogma, while in his inmost soul he equally despised the combatants on either side.

The effect he produced outside the Council was far more flattering than the part he had to play within the walls of Santa Maria Novella. Instead of power-loving ecclesiastics and pig-headed theologians, anxious only to extend their privileges and establish their supremacy, he found a multitude of sympathetic and enthusiastic listeners. The Florentines were just then in the first flush of their passion for Greek study. Plato, worshipped as an unknown god, whose rising would dispel the mists of scholastic theology, was upon the lips of every student. Men were thirsting for the philosophy that had the charm of poetry, that delighted the imagination while it fortified the understanding, and that lent its glamour to the dreams and yearnings of a youthful age. What they wanted Gemistos possessed in abundance. From the treasures of a memory stored with Platonic, Pythagorean, and Alexandrian mysticism he poured forth copious streams of indiscriminate erudition. The ears of his audience were open; their intellects were far from critical. They accepted the gold and dross of his discourse alike as purest metal. Hanging upon the lips of the eloquent, grave, beautiful old man,

who knew so much that they desired to learn, they called him Socrates and Plato in their ecstasy. It was during this visit to Florence that he adopted the name of Plethon, which, while it played upon Gemistos, had in it the ring of his great master's surname.<sup>56</sup> The devotion of his Greek disciples bore no comparison with the popularity he acquired among Italians; and he had the satisfaction of being sure that the seed of Platonic philosophy sown by him would spring up in the rich soil of those powerful and eager minds. Cosimo de' Medici, convinced of the importance of Platonic studies by his conversations with Gemistos, founded the famous Florentine Academy, and designated the young Marsilio Ficino for the special task of translating and explaining the Platonic writings.<sup>57</sup> When we call to mind the influence which the Platonic Academy of Florence, through Ficino and Pico della Mirandola, exerted over the whole thought of Italy, and, through Reuchlin and his pupil Melanchthon, over that of Germany, we are able to estimate the impulse given by Gemistos to the movement of the fifteenth century. It may be added that Platonic studies in Italy never recovered from the impress of Neo-platonic mysticism which proceeded from his mind.

While resident in Florence he published two treatises on Fate and on the differences between Plato and Aristotle. The former was an anti-Christian work, in so far as it denied the freedom of arbitrary activity to God as well as men. The latter raised a controversy in Italy and Greece, which long survived its author, exercising the scholars of the Renaissance to some purpose on the texts and doctrines of the chief great thinkers of antiquity. Gemistos attacked Aristotle in general for atheism and irreligious morality, while he proved that the Platonic system, as interpreted by him, was deeply theological. Without entering into the details of a dispute that continued to rage for many years, and aroused the bitterest feelings on both sides, it is enough to observe that Aristotle had for centuries been regarded as the pillar of orthodoxy in the Latin Church, while Plato supplied eclectic thinkers with a fair cloak for rationalistic speculations and theistic heresies. The opponents of Aristotle were undermining the foundations of the time-honoured scholastic fabric. The opponents of Plato accused his votaries of drowning the Christianity they pretended to maintain, in a vague ocean of heretical mysticism. It is indeed difficult to understand how Ficino, who worshipped Plato no less fervently than Christ, could avoid reducing Christianity to the level of Paganism, while he attempted to demon-

<sup>56</sup> Γεμιστός and γεμίζω, Πλήθων and πλήθω. Both mean to be full. Plato, however, is said to have been called Πλάτων, because of his broad shoulders or his breadth of eloquence.

<sup>57</sup> See the translation of Plotinus by Ficino, quoted by Schultze, p. 76: 'Magnus Cosmus, Senatûs consulto patriæ pater, quo tempore concilium inter Græcos atque Latinos sub Eugenio pontifice Florentiæ tractabatur, philosophum Græcum nomine Gemistum, cognomine Plethonem quasi Platonem alterum, de mysteriis Platoniciis disputantem frequenter audivit. E cujus ore ferventi sic afflatus est protinus, sic animatus, ut inde Academiam quandam altâ mente conceperit, hanc opportuno primum tempore pariturus.'

strate that the Platonic system contained the essence of the Christian faith. This was, in fact, nothing less than abandoning the exclusive pretensions of revealed religion and the authority of the Church.

Before the year 1441 Gemistos had returned to Mistra, where he continued to exercise his magistracy. His old age was embittered by the fierce attacks directed by Gennadios,<sup>58</sup> afterwards Patriarch of Constantinople, against the esoteric doctrines of the Νέμωι. Gennadios accused him roundly of Paganism, continuing his polemic against the book long after the death of its author. That event happened in 1450. Gemistos was buried at Mistra; but five years later Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta, moved by ardent love of learning and by veneration for the philosopher, exhumed his bones, and transferred them to the Church of S. Francesco at Rimini, which Leo Alberti had but recently built for him.<sup>59</sup>

Of Bessarion I shall have to speak elsewhere; but, in order to complete the review of Greek studies in Florence at this epoch, mention must now be made of two Greeks who filled the chair of the University with distinguished success.

That John Argyropoulos, a native of Byzantium, visited Italy before the fall of the Greek Empire, appears from Vespasiano's account of his residence with Palla Strozzi at Padua during the first years of his exile.<sup>60</sup> In 1456 Cosimo called him to Florence, secured him good appointments from the *studio pubblico*, and installed him as public and private teacher of Greek language and philosophy. Argyropoulos laboured at Florence for a space of fifteen years, counting the most distinguished citizens among his pupils. From Florence he removed to Rome, where Reuchlin heard him lecture upon Thucydides in the pontificate of Sixtus IV. Reuchlin's scholarship, if we may trust Melancthon, was rated at so high a value by this master that, on his departure from Rome, he exclaimed, 'Now hath Greece flown beyond the Alps!' A more commanding personage than Argyropoulos was Georgios Trapezuntios, who came to Italy as early as 1420, and professed Greek at Venice, Florence, Rome, and other cities. His temper was proud, choleric, and quarrelsome; but the history of his disputes belongs to the next chapter, which will treat of Rome. I may here mention that, during the residence of the Papal Court at Florence, he gave instruction both public and private,<sup>61</sup> without, however, entering into intimacy with the Medicean circle. After Manuel Chrysoloras, it can be said with certainty that the revival of Hellenism in the fifteenth century at Florence was due to the three men of whom I have been speaking—Georgios Gemistos, Joannes Argyropoulos, and Georgios Trapezuntios. Of the labours of the last in Rome, as well as of Theodoros Gaza, Deme-

<sup>58</sup> Schultze, p. 92. His secular name was Georgios Scholarios.

<sup>59</sup> See Vol. I., *Age of the Despots*, pp. 87, 88, and *Sketches in Italy and Greece*, article 'Rimini.'

<sup>60</sup> *Vita di Palla di Noferi Strozzi*, p. 284.

<sup>61</sup> See Vespasiano, p. 486.

trius Chalcondylas, Andronicus Callistus and the Lascari, it is not yet time to speak in detail. Each deserves a separate commemoration, since to their joint activity in teaching, Europe owes Greek scholarship.<sup>62</sup>

Before passing from Florence to Rome, which at this time formed the second centre of Italian humanism, something should be said about the state of learning in the other republics. The causes that decided the pre-eminence of Florence have been already touched upon. It is enough to observe here that, while the Universities of Bologna, Siena, and Perugia engaged professors of eloquence at high salaries, the literary enthusiasm of those cities was in no way comparable to that of Florence. Their culture depended on the illustrious visitors who fixed their residence from time to time within their walls. Genoa remained almost dead to learning. At Venice the study of the classics engaged the attention of a few nobles, without permeating the upper classes or giving a decided tone to society at large. Though the illustrious Greek refugees made it their custom to halt for a season at Venice, while nearly all Italian teachers of note lectured there on short engagements, it is none the less true that the Venetians were backward to encourage literature. They opened no public libraries, made no efforts to retain the services of scholars for the State, and regarded the pretensions of the humanists with cold contempt. In letters, as in the fine arts, Venice waited till the rest of Italy had blossomed. Bembo succeeded to Poliziano, as Titian to Raphael. Much good, however, was done by men like the Giustiniani and Paolo Zane, who furnished young students with the means of visiting Constantinople, and who provided them with professorial chairs on their return. The *gentiluomini* could also count among their number Francesco Barbaro, no less distinguished by his knowledge of both learned languages than by the correspondence he maintained with all the scholars of his time. While yet a young man, he had imbibed the Florentine spirit in the house of Cosimo de' Medici. On his return to Venice he studied under the best masters, and soon attained such excellence of style that Poggio compared his treatise on marriage to the 'De Officiis' of Cicero. The Republic of Venice, however, demanded more of patriotic service from her high-born citizens than the commonwealth of Florence; and Barbaro had to spend his life in the discharge of grave State duties, finding little leisure for the cultivation of his literary talents. It remained for him to win the fame of a Mæcenas, who, had he chosen, might have disputed laurels with the ablest of the scholars he protected.

<sup>62</sup> See long lists in Tiraboschi, vol. vi. pp. 812, 822-837, of foreign and Italian Grecians.

## CHAPTER V

### SECOND PERIOD OF HUMANISM

*Transition from Florence to Rome—Vicissitudes of Learning at the Papal Court—Diplomatic Humanists—Protonotaries—Apostolic Scribes—Ecclesiastical Sophists—Immorality and Artificiality of Scholarship in Rome—Poggio and Bruni, Secretaries—Eugenius IV.—His Patronage of Scholars—Flavio Biondo—Solid Erudition—Nicholas V.—His Private History—Nature of his Talents—His unexpected Elevation to the Roman See—Jubilation of the Humanists—His Protection of Learned Men in Rome—A Workshop of Erudition—A Factory of Translations—High Sums paid for Literary Labour—Poggio Fiorentino—His Early Life—His Journeys—His Eminence as a Man of Letters—His Attitude toward Ecclesiastics—His Invectives—Humanistic Gladiators—Poggio and Filelfo—Poggio and Guarino—Poggio and Valla—Poggio and Perotti—Poggio and Georgius Trapezuntios—Literary Scandals—Poggio's Collections of Antiquities—Chancellor of Florence—Cardinal Bessarion—His Library—Theological Studies—A apology for Plato—The Greeks in Italy—Humanism at Naples—Want of Culture in Southern Italy—Learning an Exotic—Alfonso the Magnificent—Scholars in the Camp—Literary Dialogues at Naples—Antonio Beccadelli—'The Hermaphroditus'—Lorenzo Valla—The Epicurean—The Critic—The Opponent of the Church—Bartolommeo Fazio—Giannantonio Porcello—Court of Milan—Filippo Maria Visconti—Decembrio's Description of his Master—Francesco Filelfo—His Early Life—Visit to Constantinople—Place at Court—Marriage—Return to Italy—Venice—Bologna—His Pretensions as a Professor—Florence—Feuds with the Florentines—Immersion in Politics—Siena—Settles at Milan—His Fame—Private Life and Public Interests—Overtures to Rome—Filelfo under the Sforza Tyranny—Literary Brigandage—Death at Florence—Filelfo as the Representative of a Class—Vittorino da Feltre—Early Education—Scheme of Training Youths as Scholars—Residence at Padua—Residence at Mantua—His School of Princes—Liberality to Poor Students—Details of his Life and System—Court of Ferrara—Guarino da Verona—House Tutor of Lionello d'Este—Giovanni Aurispa—Smaller Courts—Carpi—Mirandola—Rimini and the Malatesta Tyrants—Cesena—Pesaro—Urbino and Duke Frederick—Vespasiano da Bisticci.*

IN passing from Florence to Rome, we are struck with the fact that neither in letters nor in art had the Papal city any real life of her own. Her intellectual enthusiasms were imported; her activity varied with the personal interests of successive Popes. Stimulated by the munificence of one Holy Father, starved by the niggardliness of another; petted and caressed by Nicholas V., watched with jealous mistrust by Paul II.; thrust into the background by Alexander, and brought into the light by Leo—learning was subjected to rude vicissitudes at Rome. Very few of the scholars who shed lustre on the reigns of liberal Pontiffs were Romans, nor did the nobles of the Papal States affect the fame of patrons. We have, therefore, in dealing with humanism at Rome, to bear in mind that it flourished fitfully, precariously, as an exotic, its

growth being alternately checked and encouraged at the pleasure of the priest in office.

In spite of these variable conditions, one class of humanists never failed at Rome. During the period of schisms and councils, when Ppoe and Anti-pope were waging wordy warfare in the Courts of congregated Christendom, it was impossible to dispense with the services of practised writers and accomplished orators. As composers of diplomatic despatches, letters, bulls, and protocols; as disseminators of squibs and invectives; as redactors of state papers; as pleaders, legates, ambassadors, and private secretaries—scholars swarmed around the person of the Pontiff. Their official titles varied, some being called Secretaries to the Chancery, others Apostolic Scriptoris, others again Protonotaries; while their duties were divided between the regular business of the Curia and the miscellaneous transactions that arose from special emergencies of the Papal See. Their services were well rewarded. In addition to about 700 florins of pay and perquisites, they, for the most part, entered into minor orders and held benefices. Men of acute intellect and finished style, who had absorbed the culture of their age, and could by rhetoric enforce what arguments they chose to wield, found, therefore, a good market for their talents at the Court of Rome. They soon became a separate and influential class, divided from the nobility by their birth and foreign connections, and from the churchmen by their secular status and avowed impiety, yet mingling in society with both and trusting to their talents to support their dignity. At the Council of Basle the protonotaries even claimed to take precedence of the bishops on occasions of high ceremony, arguing, from the nature of their office and the rarity of their acquirements, that they had a better right than priests to approach the person of the Sovereign Pontiff. Poggio and Bruni, Losco, Aurispa, and Biondo raised their voices in this quarrel, which proved how indispensable the mundane needs of the Papacy had rendered these free-lances of literature. Through them the spirit of humanism, antagonistic to the spirit of the Church, possessed itself of the Eternal City; and much of the flagrant immorality which marked Rome during the Renaissance may be ascribed to the influence of paganising scholars, freed from the restrictions of family and local opinion, indifferent to religion, and less absorbed in study for its own sake than in the profits to be gained by the exercise of a practised pen. There was a real discord between the principles which the Church professed, and the new culture that flourished on a heathen soil. While merely secular interests blinded the Popes to the perils which might spring from fostering this discord, humanistic enthusiasm had so thoroughly penetrated Italy that to exclude it from Rome was impossible. Neo-pagan scholarship added, therefore, lustre to the Papal Court, as one among the many splendours of that worldly period which raised the See of Rome to eminence above the States of Italy. The light it shed, however, had no vital heat. Learning was always an article of artificial luxury at Rome, not, as at Florence, part of the nation's life;



and when the gilded pomp of Leo dwindled down to Clement's abject misery and utter ruin, it was found that such encouragement as Popes had given to literature had been a source of weakness and decay. We may still be sincerely thankful that the Pontiffs took the line they did; for had they placed themselves in a position of antagonism to the humanistic movement, instead of utilising and approving of it, the free development of Italian scholarship might have sustained a dangerous check.

It was from Florence that Rome received her intellectual stimulus. The connection began in 1402, when Boniface IX. appointed Poggio to the post of Apostolic Secretary, which he held for fifty years. In 1405 Lionardo Bruni obtained the same office from Innocent VII. The powerful personality of these men, in whom the energies of the humanistic revival were concentrated, impressed the Roman Curia with a stamp it never lost. Good Latinity became a *sine qua non* in the Papal Chancery; and when Gregory XII. named Antonio Losco of Verona one of his secretaries, it was natural that this distinguished scholar, following the Florentine example of Coluccio Salutato, should compose a book of forms in Ciceronian style for the use of his office.<sup>1</sup> During the insignificant pontificate of Martin V., while the Curia resided in exile at Florence, the chain which was binding Rome to the city of Italian culture continued to gain strength. The result of all the discords which rent the Church in the first half of the fifteenth century was to Italianise the Papal See; nor did anything contribute to his end more powerfully than the Florentine traditions of three successive Popes—Martin V., Eugenius IV., and Nicholas V.

Eugenius was a Venetian of good family, who inherited considerable wealth from his father. Having realised his fortune, he bestowed 20,000 ducats on charitable institutions and took orders in the Church.<sup>2</sup> In 1431 he was raised to the Papacy; but the disturbed state of Rome obliged him to quit the Vatican in mean disguise, and to seek safety in flight from Ostia. He spent the greater portion of his life in Tuscany, occupied less with humanistic interests than with the reformation of monastic orders and the conduct of ecclesiastical affairs in the Councils of Basle and Florence. Though he did not share the passion of his age for learning, the patronage which he extended to scholars was substantial and important. Giovanni Aurispa received from him the title of Apostolic Secretary, and was appointed interpreter between the Greeks and Italians at the Council of the two Churches. Even the paganising Carlo Marsuppini was enrolled upon the list of Papal secretaries, while Filelfo and Piero Candido Decembrio, who added lustre at this epoch to the Court of Milan, were invited by Eugenius with highly flattering promises. The value of these meagre statements consists in this, that even a Pope, whose personal proclivities were monastic

<sup>1</sup> See Facius, *Di Viris Illustribus*, p. 3, quoted by Voigt, p. 278.

<sup>2</sup> See Vespasiano, p. 6.

rather than humanistic, felt the necessity of borrowing all the strength he could obtain from men of letters in an age when learning itself was power. More closely attached to his Court than those who have been mentioned, were Maffeo Begio, the poet, and Flavio Biondo, one of the soundest and most conscientious students of the time.<sup>3</sup>

Though Biondo had but little Greek, and could boast of no beauty of style, his immense erudition raised him to high rank among Italian scholars. The work he undertook was to illustrate the antiquities of Italy in a series of historical, topographical, and archæological studies. His 'Roma Instaurata,' 'Roma Triumphans,' and 'Italia Illustrata,' three bulky encyclopædias of information concerning ancient manners, laws, sites, monuments, and races, may justly be said to have formed the basis of all subsequent dictionaries of Roman antiquities. Another product of his industry was entitled 'Historiarum ab Inclinatione Romanorum.' Three decades and a portion of the fourth were written, when death put a stop to the completion of this gigantic task. In estimating the value of Biondo's contributions to history, we must remember that he had no previous compilations whereon to base his own researches. The vast stores of knowledge he collected and digested were derived from original sources. He grasped the whole of Latin literature, both classical and mediæval, arranged the results of his comprehensive reading into sections, and furnished the learned world with tabulated materials for the study of Roman institutions in the State, the camp, the law courts, private life, and religious ceremonial. Obstinate indeed must have been the industry of the scholar, who, in addition to these classical researches, undertook to narrate the dissolution of antique society and to present a faithful picture of Italy in the dark ages. Biondo's 'History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,' conceived in an age devoted to stylistic niceties and absorbed by the attractions of renascent Hellenism, inspires our strongest admiration. Yet its author failed in his lifetime to win the distinction he deserved. Though he held the office of Apostolic Secretary under four Popes, his marriage stopped the way to ecclesiastical preferment, while his incapacity to use the arts of the stylist, the sophist, the flatterer, and the translator, lost him the favour his more solid qualities had at first procured. Eugenius could appreciate a man of his stamp better than Nicholas V., whose special tastes inclined to elegant humanism rather than to ponderous erudition.

The lives of all the humanists illustrate the honours and the wealth secured by learning for her votaries in the Renaissance. No example, however, is so striking as that furnished by the biography of Nicholas V. Tommaso Parentucelli was born at Pisa in 1398. While he was still an infant his parents, in spite of their poverty and humble station, which might have been expected to shield them from political tyranny, were exiled to Sarzana;<sup>4</sup> and at the age of nine he lost his father at that

<sup>3</sup> He was born at Forlì in 1388, and died in 1463, the father of five sons.

<sup>4</sup> So Vespasiano relates the cause of their removal from Pisa. P. 20.

place. Sarzana has consequently gained the credit of giving birth to the first great Pope of the Renaissance period. The young Tommaso found means, though extremely poor, to visit the University of Bologna, where he studied theology and made himself a master in the seven liberal arts. After six years' residence at Bologna, his total destitution, combined, perhaps, with a desire for more instruction in elegant scholarship than the university afforded, led him to seek work in Florence. He must have already acquired some reputation, since Rinaldo degli Albizzi received him as house-tutor to his children for one year, at the expiration of which time he entered the service of Palla degli Strozzi in a similar capacity. The money thus obtained enabled him to return to Bologna, and to take his degree as Doctor of Theology at the age of twenty-two. He was now fully launched in life. The education he had received at Bologna qualified him for office in the church, while his two years' residence at Florence had rendered him familiar with men of polite learning and of gentle breeding. Niccolo degli Albergati, Archbishop of Bologna, became his patron, and appointed him controller of his household. Albergati was one of the cardinals of Eugenius IV., a man of considerable capacity, and alive to the intellectual interests of his age. When he followed the Papal Court to Florence, Tommaso attended him, and here began the period which was destined to influence his subsequent career. Inspired with a passionate devotion to books for their own sake, and gifted with ardent curiosity and all-embracing receptivity of intellect, the young scholar found himself plunged into a society of which literature formed the most absorbing occupation. He soon became familiar with Cosimo de' Medici, and no meetings of the learned were complete without him. A glimpse may be obtained of the literary circle he frequented at this time from a picturesque passage in Vespasiano.<sup>5</sup> 'It was the wont of Messer Lionardo d' Arezzo, Messer Giannozzo Manetti, Messer Poggio, Messer Carlo d' Arezzo, Messer Giovanni Aurispa, Maestro Gasparo da Bologna, and many other men of learning to congregate every morning and evening at the side of the Palazzo, where they entered into discussions and disputes on various subjects. As soon, then, as Maestro Tommaso had attended the Cardinal to the Palazzo, he joined them, mounted on a mule, with two servants on foot; and generally he was attired in blue, and his servants in long dresses of a darker colour. At that time the pomp of the Court of Rome was not by any means what it is nowadays. In the place I have named he was always to be found, conversing and disputing, since he was a most impassioned debater.'

Tommaso was not a man of genius; his talents were better suited for collecting and digesting what he read, than for original research and composition. He had a vast memory, and was an indefatigable student, not only perusing but annotating all the books he purchased. Pius II. used to say of him that what he did not know must lie outside

<sup>5</sup> P. 23.

the sphere of human knowledge. In speech he was fluent, and in disputation eager; but he never ranked among the ornate orators and stylists of the age. His wide acquaintance with all branches of literature, and his faculty for classification, rendered him useful to Cosimo de' Medici, who employed him on the catalogue of the Marcian Library. From Cosimo in return, Tommaso caught the spirit which sustained him in his coming days of greatness. Already, at this early period, while living almost on the bounty of the Medici, he never lost an opportunity of accumulating books, and would even borrow money to secure a precious MS.<sup>6</sup> He used to say that, if ever he acquired wealth, he would expend it in book-buying and building—a resolution to which he adhered when he rose to the Pontificate.

Soon after the death of Albergati in 1443, Eugénus promoted Tommaso to the see of Bologna; a cardinal's hat followed within a few months; and in 1447 he was elected Pope of Rome. So sudden an elevation from obscurity and poverty to the highest place in Christendom has rarely happened; nor is it even now easy to understand what combinations of unsuccessful intrigues among the princes of the Church enabled this little, ugly, bright-eyed, restless-minded scholar to creep into S. Peter's seat. Perhaps the simplest explanation is the best. The times were somewhat adverse to the Papacy, nor was the tiara quite as much an object of secular ambition as it afterwards became. Humanism meanwhile exercised strong fascination over every class in Italy, and it would seem that Tommaso Parentucelli had nothing but his reputation for learning to thank for his advancement. 'Who in Florence would have thought that a poor bell-ringer of a priest would be made Pope, to the confusion of the proud?' This was his own complacent exclamation to Vespasiano, who had gone to kiss his old friend's feet, and found him seated on a throne with twenty torches blazing round him.<sup>7</sup>

The rejoicings with which the humanists hailed the elevation of one of their own number to the Papal throne may be readily imagined; nor were their golden expectations, founded on a previous knowledge of his liberality in all things that pertained to learning, destined to be disappointed. Nicholas V., to quote the words of Vespasiano, who knew him well, 'was a foe to ceremonies and vain flatteries, open and candid, without knowing how to feign; avarice he never harboured, for he was always spending beyond his means.'<sup>8</sup> His revenues were devoted to maintaining a splendid Court, rebuilding the fortifications and palaces of Rome, and showering wealth on men of letters. In the protection extended by this Pope to literature we may notice that he did not attempt to restore the *studio pubblico* of Rome, and that he showed a decided preference for works of solid learning and translations. His

<sup>6</sup> Vespasiano, p. 27.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* p. 33.

<sup>8</sup> Vespasiano, pp. 25, 27.

tastes led him to delight in critical and grammatical treatises, and his curiosity impelled him to get Latin versions made of the Greek authors. It is possible that he did nothing for the Roman university because he considered Florence sufficient for the humanistic needs of Italy, and his own Alma Mater for the graver studies of the three professions. Still this neglect is noticeable in the case of a Pontiff whose one public aim was to restore Rome to the rank of a metropolis, and whose chief private interest was study.

The most permanent benefit conferred by him on Roman studies was the foundation of the Vatican Library, on which he spent about 40,000 scudi forming a collection of some 5,000 volumes.<sup>9</sup> He employed the best scribes, and obtained the rarest books; nor was there anyone in Italy better qualified than himself to superintend the choice and arrangement of such a library. It had been his intention to place it in S. Peter's and to throw it open to the public; but he died before this plan was matured. It remained for Sixtus IV. to carry out his project.

During the pontificate of Nicholas Rome became a vast workshop of erudition, a factory of translations from Greek into Latin. These were done for the most part by Greeks who had an imperfect knowledge of Latin, and by Italians who had not complete mastery of Greek. The work achieved was unequal and of no great permanent value; yet for the time being it served a purpose of utility, nor could the requirements of the age have been so fully satisfied by any other method. Nearly all the eminent scholars at that time in Italy were engaged in this labour. How liberally they were rewarded may be gathered from the following details. Lorenzo Valla obtained 500 scudi for his version of Thucydides; Guarino received the larger sum of 1,500 scudi for Strabo; Perotti 500 ducats for Polybius; while Manetti was pensioned at the rate of 600 scudi per annum to enable him to carry on his sacred studies. Nicholas delighted in Greek history. Accordingly, Appian was translated by Piero Candido Decembrio, Diodorus Siculus and the 'Cyropædia' of Xenophon by Poggio,<sup>10</sup> Herodotus by Valla. Valla and Decembrio were both engaged upon the 'Iliad' in Latin prose; but the dearest wish of Nicholas in his last years was to see the poems of Homer in the verse of Filelfo. Nor were the Greeks then resident in Italy neglected. To Georgios Trapezuntios the Pope entrusted the 'Physics,' 'Problems,' and 'Metaphysics' of Aristotle. The same scholar tried his hand at the 'Laws' of Plato, and, in concert with Decembrio, produced a version of the 'Republic.' Gregorios Tifernas undertook the 'Ethics' of Aristotle, and Theodorus Gaza the 'History of Animals.' To this list should be added the Greek Fathers, Theophrastus, Ptolemy, and minor works which it would be tedious to enumerate.<sup>11</sup>

The profuse liberality of Nicholas brought him thus into relation with

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* p. 38.

<sup>10</sup> The latter was intended for Alfonso of Naples.

<sup>11</sup> Tiraboschi is the authority for these details.

the whole learned world of Italy. Among the humanists who resided at his Court in Rome, mention must be made of Lorenzo Valla, who was appointed Apostolic Scriptor in 1447, and who opened a school of eloquence in 1450. Piero Candido Decembrio obtained the post of secretary and overseer of the Abbreviators.<sup>12</sup> Giovanni Tortello, of Arezzo, the author of a useful book on the orthography of Greek words, superintended the Pope's library. Piero da Noceto, whose tomb in the cathedral at Lucca is one of Matteo da Civitate's masterpieces, was private secretary and comptroller of the Pope's affairs. Of the circle gathered round Bessarion I shall have occasion to speak later on. Our present attention must be concentrated on a man who, more even than Nicholas himself, might claim the right to give his own name to this age of learning.

Gian Francesco Poggio Bracciolini is better known in the annals of literature as Poggi Fiorentino, though he was not made a burgher of Florence until late in life. Born in 1380 at Terranova, a village of the Florentine *contado*, he owed his education to Florence. In Latin he was the pupil of John of Ravenna, and in Greek of Manuel Chrysoloras. During his youth he supported himself by copying MSS. for the Florentine market. Coluccio Salutato and Niccolo de' Niccoli befriended the young student, who entered as early as the year 1402 or 1403 into the Papal Chancery.<sup>13</sup> Though Poggio's life for the following half-century was spent in the service of the Roman Curia, he refused to take orders in the Church, and remained at heart a humanist. With the Florentine circle of scholars he maintained an unremitting correspondence, sending them notices of his discoveries in the convents of Switzerland and Germany, receiving from them literary gossip in return, joining in their disputes, and more than once engaging in fierce verbal duels to befriend his Medicean allies. His duties and his tastes alike made him a frequent traveller, and not the least of the benefits conferred by him upon posterity are his pictures of foreign manners. At the Council of Constance, for example, he saw and heard Jerome of Prague, in whom he admired the firmness and intrepid spirit of a Cato.<sup>14</sup> At Baden in Switzerland he noticed the custom, strange to Italian eyes, of men and women bathing together, eating, drinking, and playing at chess or cards upon floating tables in the water, while visitors looked down upon them

<sup>12</sup> The more complete notices which Valla and Decembrio deserve will be given in the history of scholarship at Naples and at Milan.

<sup>13</sup> Of his debt to Niccolo de' Niccoli Poggio speaks with great warmth of feeling in a letter on his death addressed to Carlo Aretino: 'Quem enim patrem habui cui plus debuerim quam Nicolao? Hic mihi parens ab adolescentia, hic postmodum amicus, hic studiorum meorum adiutor atque hortator fuit, hic consilio, libris, opibus semper me ut filium et amicum fovit atque adjuvit.'—*Poggii Opera, Basilea, ex aedibus Henrici Petri, MDXXXVIII.* p. 342. To this edition of Poggio's works my future references are made.

<sup>14</sup> 'Stabat impavidus, intrepidus, mortem non contemnens solum sed appetens ut alterum Catonem dixeris.'—*Opp. Omnia*, p. 301. This most interesting letter, addressed to Lionardo Bruni, is translated by Shepherd, *Life of Poggio Bracciolini*, pp. 78-88.

from galleries above, as they now do at Leukerbad.<sup>15</sup> In England he observed that the gentry preferred residence in their country houses and secluded parks to the town life then, as now, fashionable in Italy, and commented upon the vast wealth and boorish habits of the great ecclesiastics.<sup>16</sup> Concerning his discoveries of MSS. I have had already occasion to write; nor need I here repeat what I have said about his antiquarian researches among the ruins of ancient Rome. Poggio was a man of wide sympathies, active curiosity, and varied interests—no mere book-worm, but one whose eyes and mind were open to the world around him.

In literature he embraced the whole range of contemporary studies, making his mark as a public orator, a writer of rhetorical treatises and dialogues, a panegyrist of the dead, a violent impeacher and impugner of the living, a translator from the Greek, an elegant epistolographer, a grave historian, and a facetious compiler of anecdotes and epigrams. He possessed a style at once easy and pointed, correct in diction and varied in cadence, equally adapted for serious discourse and witty trifling, and not less formidable in abuse than delicate in flattery. This at least was the impression which his copious and facile Latin, always fluent and yet always full of sense, produced on his contemporaries. For us its finest flights of rhetoric have lost their charm, and its best turns of phrase their point. So impossible is it that the fashionable style of one age should retain its magic for posterity, unless it be truly classical in form, or weighted with sound thought, or animated with high inspiration. Just these qualities were missed by Poggio and his compeers. Setting no more serious aim before them than the imitation of Livy and Cicero, Seneca and Cæsar, they fell far short of their originals; nor had they matter to make up for their defect of elegance. Poggio's treatises 'De Nobilitate,' 'De Varietate Fortunæ,' 'De Miseriâ Humanæ Conditionis,' 'De Infelicitate Principum,' 'An Seni sit Uxor ducenda,' 'Historia Disceptiva Convivialis,' and so forth, were as interesting to Italy in the fifteenth century as Voltaire's occasional essays to our more immediate ancestors. His controversial writings passed for models of destructive eloquence, his satires on the clergy for masterpieces of sarcastic humour, his Florentine history for a supreme achievement in the noblest Latin manner. Yet the whole of this miscellaneous literature seems coarse and ineffective to the modern taste. We read it, not without repugnance, in order to obtain an insight into the spirit of the author's age.

Two important points in Poggio's biography will serve to illustrate the social circumstances of the humanists. The first is the attitude adopted by him toward the churchmen, with whom he passed the best years of his life in close intimacy; the second, his fierce warfare waged

<sup>15</sup> *Opera Omnia*, p. 297. See Shepherd, pp. 67-76, for a translation of this letter to Niccolo de' Niccoli.

<sup>16</sup> Cardinal Beaufort had invited him to England.



with rivals and opponents in the field of scholarship. Though Poggio served the Church for half a century, no one exposed the vices of the clergy with more ruthless sarcasm, or turned the follies of the monks to ridicule with more relentless scorn. After reading his 'Dialogue against the Hypocrites,' his 'Invective against Felix the Antipope,' and his 'Facetiæ,' it is difficult to understand how a satirist who knew the weak points of the Church so intimately, and exposed them so freely, could have held high station and been honoured in the Papal Curia. They confirm in the highest degree all that has been written in the previous volume about the division between religion and morality in Italy, the cynical self-satisfaction of the clergy, and the secular indifference of the Papacy, proving at the same time the proudly independent position which the talents of the humanists had won for them at Rome. At the end of the 'Facetiæ'—a collection of grossly indecent and not always very witty stories—Poggio refers to the meetings with which he and his comrades entertained themselves after the serious business of the day was over.<sup>17</sup> Their place of resort was in the precincts of the Lateran, where they had established a club which took the name of 'Bugiale,' or Lie Factory.<sup>18</sup> Apostolic secretaries, writers to the Chancery, protonotaries, and Papal scribes here met together after laying down the pens they had employed in drafting Bulls and dispensations, encyclical letters and diplomatic missives. To make puns, tell scandalous stories, and invent amusing plots for novelettes was the chief amusement of these Roman wits. Their most stinging shafts of satire were reserved for monks and priests; but they spared no class or profession, and made free with the names of living persons.<sup>19</sup> Against the higher clergy it might not have been safe to utter even the truth, except in strictest privacy, seeing that preferment had to be expected from the Sacred College and the Holy Father. The mendicant orders and the country parsons, therefore, bore the brunt of their attack, while the whole tone of their discourse made it clear how little they respected the religion and the institutions of the Church. Such fragments of these conversations as Poggio thought fit to preserve, together with anecdotes borrowed from the 'Cent Nouvelles nouvelles' and other sources, he committed to Latin, and printed in the later years of his life. The title given to the book was 'Facietiarum Liber.' It ran speedily through numerous editions, and was read all over Europe with the same eagerness that the 'Epistolæ Obscurorum Virorum' afterwards excited. Underneath its ribaldry and nonsense, however, there lay no serious intention. The satires on the clergy were contemptuous and flippant, arguing more liking on the part of their author for scurrilous jests than any earnest wish to prove the degradation of monasticism. Not a word of censure from the Vatican can I find recorded against this marvellous

<sup>17</sup> *Poggi Florentini Facietiarum Libellus Unicus*, Londini, 1798, vol. i. p. 282.

<sup>18</sup> 'Mendaciorum veluti officina' is Poggio's own explanation of the phrase.

<sup>19</sup> 'Tibi parcebatur nemini, in lacescendo ea quæ non probabantur a nobis.'

production of a Papal secretary's pen. Here, by way of illustration, it may be mentioned that Filelfo, on his way through Rome to Naples, placed his satires—the most nauseous compositions that coarse spite and filthy fancy ever spawned—in the hands of Nicholas V. The Pope retained them for nine days, read them, returned them with thanks, and rewarded their author with a purse of 500 ducats.

The 'Dialogue against the Hypocrites' contains less of mere scurrility and more that bears with real weight on the vices of the clergy. Begging friars, preachers, confessors, and aspirants to the fame of holiness are cited by name and scourged with pitiless impartiality, while the worldly ambition of the Roman churchmen is unmasked. The 'Fratres Observantiæ,' who flourished under Pope Eugenius, receive stern catigation at the hands of Carlo Aretino. Shepherd remarks, not without justice, on this dialogue that, had the author 'ventured to advance the sentiments which it contains in the days of Eugenius, he would in all probability have expiated his temerity by the forfeit of his life.'<sup>20</sup> Nicholas V., who appreciated the pungency of its satiric style, instead of resenting its free speech, directed his friend Poggio's pen against his rival Felix. Raised to the Papacy by the Council of Basle in 1439, Amadeus, the ex-Duke of Savoy, still persisted in his Papal title after the election of Nicholas; and though the Sovereign of the Vatican could well afford to scorn the hermit of Ripaille, he thought it prudent to discharge the heavy guns of humanistic eloquence against the Antipope. A ponderous invective was the result, wherein Poggio described the unfortunate Felix as 'another Cerberus,' 'a rapacious wolf,' 'a golden calf,' 'a perverter of the faith and foe to true religion,' 'a high priest of malignity,' 'a roaring lion'—stigmatising the Council to whom he owed his election as 'that sink of iniquity the Synagogue of Basle,' 'a monstrous birth,' 'conventicle of reprobates,' 'tumultuary band of debauched men,' 'apostates, fornicators, ravishers, deserters, men convicted of most shameful crimes, blasphemers, rebels against God.'<sup>21</sup> To such amenities of controversial rhetoric did even Popes descend, substituting sound and fury for sense, and trusting to vituperation in the absence of more valid arguments.

Poggio, next to Filelfo, was the most formidable gladiator in that age of literary duellists. 'In his invectives he displayed such vehemence,' writes Vespasiano,<sup>22</sup> 'that the whole world was afraid of him.' Even Alfonso of Naples found it prudent to avert his anger by a timely present of 600 ducats, when Poggio complained of his remissness in acknowledging the version of Xenophon's 'Cyropædia,'<sup>23</sup> and hinted at the same time that a scholar's pen was powerful enough to punish kings for their ingratitude. The overtures, again, made to Poggio by Filippo Maria Visconti, and the consideration he received from Cosimo

<sup>20</sup> *Life of Poggio*, p. 423.

<sup>21</sup> *Opera Omnia*, pp. 155-164.

<sup>22</sup> P. 422.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* p. 423.

de' Medici, testified to the desire of princes for the goodwill of a spiteful and unscrupulous pamphleteer.<sup>24</sup> The most celebrated of Poggio's feuds with men of letters began when Filelfo assailed the character of Cosimo, and satirised the whole society of Florence in 1433. The full history of Filelfo's animosity against the Florentines belongs to the biography of that famous scholar. It is enough here to mention that he ridiculed Cosimo under the name of Mundus, described Poggio as Bambalio, Carlo Aretino as Codrus, and Niccolo de' Niccoli as Outis,<sup>25</sup> accusing them of literary imbecility, and ascribing to them all the crimes and vices that disgrace humanity. Poggio girded up his loins for the combat, and, in reply to Filelfo's ponderous hexameters, discharged a bulky invective in prose against the common adversary. This was answered by more satires, Poggio replying with new invectives. The quarrel lasted over many years; when, having heaped upon each other all the insults it is possible for the most corrupt imagination to conceive, they joined hands and rested from the contest.<sup>26</sup> To sully these pages with translations of Poggio's rank abuse would be impossible. I must content myself with referring readers, who are anxious to gain a more detailed acquaintance with the literary warfare of that age, to the excerpts preserved by Shepherd and Rosmini.<sup>27</sup> Suffice it to say that he poured a torrent of the filthiest calumnies upon Filelfo's wife and mother, that he accused Filelfo himself of the basest vice in youth and the most flagrant debauchery in manhood, that he represented him as a public thief, a professed cut-purse, a blasphemous atheist, soiled with sordid immoralities of every kind, and driven by his exposed felonies from town to town in search of shelter for his hated head. Filelfo replied in the same strain. All the resources of the Latin language were exhausted by the combatants in their endeavours to befoul each other's character, and the lowest depths of human nature were explored to find fresh accusations. The learned world of Italy stood by applauding, while the valiant antagonists, like gladiators of the Roman arena, plied their diverse weapons, the one discharging darts of verse, the other wielding a heavy club of prose.<sup>28</sup> Unhappily, there was enough of scandalous material in both their lives to give some colour to their accusations. Yet the virulence with which they lied against each other defeated its own object. Raking that literary dung-

<sup>24</sup> See the correspondence between Filippo Maria and Poggio, *Opp.* pp. 333-358. Letter to Cosimo, p. 339.

<sup>25</sup> 'The World, the Stammering Simpleton, the Execrable Poet, and the Nobody.' See *Auree Francisci Philelphi Poete Oratorisque Celeberrimi Satyre*. Paris, 1508. Passim.

<sup>26</sup> *Opp. Omn.* pp. 164-187. The first invective is the most venomous, and deserves to be read in the original. The last, entitled 'Invectiva Excusatoria et Reconciliatoria,' is amusing from its tone of sulky and sated exhaustion.

<sup>27</sup> *Life of Poggio*, pp. 263-272, 354. *Vita di Filelfo*.

<sup>28</sup> The language of the arena was used by these literary combatants. Thus Valla, in the exordium of his *Antidote*, describes his weapon of attack in this sentence:—'*Hæc est mea fusana, quandoquidem gladiator a gladiatore fieri cogor, et ea duplex et utraque tridens*,' p. 9.

hill, it is now impossible to distinguish the true from the false; all proportion is lost in the mass of overcharged and indiscriminate scurrility. That such encounters should have been enjoyed and applauded by polite society is one of the strangest signs of the times; and that the duellists themselves should have imagined they were treading in the steps of Cicero and Demosthenes is even more astounding.

The dispute with Filelfo was rather personal than literary. Another duel into which Poggio entered with Guarino turned upon the respective merits of Scipio and Julius Cæsar. Poggio had occasion to explain, in correspondence with a certain Scipione Ferrarese, his reasons for preferring the character of Scipio Africanus. Guarino, with a view to pleasing his pupil Lionello d' Este, a professed admirer of Cæsar, took up the cudgels in defence of the dictator,<sup>29</sup> and treated Poggio, whom he called Cæsaromastix, with supreme contempt. Poggio replied in a letter to the noble Venetian scholar Francesco Barbaro.<sup>30</sup> Hard words were exchanged on both sides, and the antagonists were only reconciled on the occasion of Poggio's marriage in 1435. Rome, however, was the theatre of his most celebrated exploits as a disputant. It chanced one day that he discovered a copy of his own epistles annotated by a Spanish nobleman who was a pupil of Lorenzo Valla.<sup>31</sup> Poggio's Latinity was not spared in the marginal strictures penned by the young student; and the fiery scholar, flying to the conclusion that the master, not the pupil, had dictated them, discharged his usual missile, a furious invective, against Valla. Thus attacked, the author of the 'Elegantia' responded in a similar composition, entitled 'Antidotum in Poggium,' and dedicated to Nicholas V.<sup>32</sup> Poggio followed with another invective; nor did the quarrel end till he had added five of these disgusting compositions to his previous achievements in the same style, and had drawn a young Latinist of promise, Niccolo Perotti, into the disgraceful fray.<sup>33</sup> What makes the termination of the squabble truly comic is that Filelfo, himself the worst offender in this way, was moved at last to write a serious letter of admonishment to the contending parties, exhorting them to consult their own dignity and to lay down arms.<sup>34</sup> Concern-

<sup>29</sup> See Rosmini, *Vita di Guarino da Verona*, vol. ii. p. 96.

<sup>30</sup> *Poggii Opera*, p. 365.

<sup>31</sup> 'Adolescens quidam auditor meus,' says Valla in the *Antidotum*, p. 2. The story is told at length, p. 151. I quote from the Cologne edition of 1527: 'Laurentii Vallæ viri clarissimi in Poggium Florentinum antidoti libri quatuor: in eundem alii duo libelli in dialogo conscripti.'

<sup>32</sup> See Shepherd's *Poggio*, pp. 470, 471, for specimens of the scurrility on both sides.

<sup>33</sup> The invectives against Valla fill from p. 188 to p. 251 of Poggio's collected works. Part of them is devoted to a defence of his own Latinity, and to a critique of Valla's *Elegantia*. But by far the larger part consists of vehement incriminations. Heresy, theft, lying, forgery, cowardice, filthy living of the most odious description, drunkenness, and insane vanity—such are the accusations, supported with a terrible array of apparent evidence. As in the case of Filelfo, Poggio does not spare his antagonist's father and mother, but heaps the vilest abuse upon everyone connected with him. Valla's *Antidote* is written in a more tempered spirit and a purer Latin style.

<sup>34</sup> Shepherd, *Life of Poggio*, p. 474.

ing the invectives and antidotes by which this war was carried on Tira-boschi writes, 'Perhaps they are the most infamous libels that have ever seen the light; there is no sort of vituperation which the antagonists do not vomit forth against each other, no obscenity and roguery of which they are not mutually accused.'

The inconceivably slight occasions upon which these learned men rushed into the arena, and flung dirt upon one another, may be imagined when we find Lorenzo Valla at feud on the one side with Georgios Trapezuntios because the one preferred Cicero and the other Quintilian, and on the other with Benedetto Morando because that scholar doubted whether Lucius and Aruns were the grandsons of Tarquinius Priscus. Sometimes private incidents aroused their wrath, as in the curious rupture between Lionardo Bruni and Niccolo de' Niccoli at Florence. The story, since it is characteristic of the time, may be briefly told. Niccolo had stolen his brother's mistress Benvenuta, and made her his concubine.<sup>35</sup> His relatives, indignant at the domestic scandal, insulted Benvenuta in the street, and Niccolo bemoaned himself to all his friends. Lionardo, to whom he applied for sympathy, very properly observed that a student ought to be better occupied than with the misfortunes of a kitchen wench. This tart reply roused Niccolo's bile, and set his caustic tongue wagging against his old friend; whereupon Lionardo Bruni launched a fierce invective in *nebulonem maledicum* against him, and the learned society of Florence indulged in a free fight on both sides.

Such quarrels were not always confined to words. There is no doubt that the dagger was employed against Filelfo by the Medicean party, while it now and then happened that the literary gladiators came to actual fisticuffs. A scene of this sort occurred at Rome in public. Georgios Trapezuntios complained that the credit of Poggio's translations from Diodorus and Xenophon really belonged to him, since he had done the work of them. Poggio shrieked out, 'You lie in your throat!' Georgios retorted with a box on Poggio's ears. Then Poggio came to close quarters, catching his adversary by the hair; and the two professors pommelled each other till their respective pupils parted them.<sup>36</sup> Such anecdotes might be multiplied indefinitely. Nor would it be unprofitable to give some account of the vehement warfare waged in Italy between the Platonists and Aristotelians, were it not that enough has already been said to illustrate the acrimonious temper of the times.

The animosity displayed by scholars in these disputes may be taken as a proof of their enthusiasm for their studies. Men have always quarrelled about politics, because politics furnish matter of profound interest to everyone. Theology, for a similar reason, never fails to rouse the deepest rancours, hatreds, and hostilities of which the human breast is capable. Science, as we know from the annals of our days, sets the

<sup>35</sup> Ambrogio Traversari, General of the Camaldolese Order, called her 'fidelissima foemina.'

<sup>36</sup> Tiraboschi, vol. vi. lib. ii. cap. 2, sect. 15.

upholders of antagonistic theories by the ears; and at times when politics have been dull, theology dormant, and science undemonstrative, even music has been found sufficient to excite a nation. In the fifteenth century scholarship was all-absorbing. It corresponded to science in our age, since it engaged the talents of the strongest workers and supplied the sources of progressive intellectual discovery. Moreover, it included both philosophy and theology, and formed the most attractive topic in all conversation. No wonder, therefore, that the limpid fountains of classical erudition were troubled by the piques and jealousies of students.

It is pleasant to turn from Poggio's wrangling to more honourable passages in his biography. Since the year 1434 he had owned a farm not far from Florence. Here he built a country residence, vying, if not in splendour, at least in elegance, with the villas of the Florentine burghers. He called it his Valdarniana, and adorned it with the fragments of antique sculpture, inscriptions, and coins, collected by him partly in person on the Roman Campagna and partly by purchase from Greece. In the following year (1435) Poggio, then a man of fifty-five, married a girl of eighteen, named Vaggia, of the noble Buondelmonte blood. In forming this connection he had to separate from a mistress who had borne him fourteen children, four of them then living. His biographer, Shepherd, indulges in some sentimental reflections upon the pain this leave-taking must have cost him. Yet the impartial critic will hardly be brought to pity Poggio, seeing that he cancelled the brief whereby he had previously legitimised his natural children, and responded with raptures to the congratulations of friends upon his new engagement. He had already been admitted to the burghership of Florence, and exempted from its taxes in consideration of his literary services; so that, on the death of his friend Carlo Aretino, in 1453, no one was found more fitting for the post of Chancellor to the Republic. As an increase of dignity, Poggio fulfilled the office of Prior, and sat among the Signory. The 'History of the Florentine Republic,' written in continuation of Lionardo Aretino's, occupied the closing years of his life. He left it still unfinished in the year 1459, when he died, and was buried in the Church of Santa Croce. I cannot find that his funeral was accompanied by the peculiar honours voted in the case of his two predecessors. The Florentines, however, erected his statue on the façade of Santa Maria del Fiore, and placed his picture by Antonio dal Pollajuolo in the hall of the Proconsolo. The fate of this statue, a work of Donatello's, was not a little curious. On the occasion of some alterations in 1560, it was removed from its first station, and set up as one among the Twelve Apostles in another part of the cathedral.

Any survey of the Court of Nicholas V. would be incomplete without some notice of the Cardinal Bessarion. Early in life he rose to high station in the Greek Church, and attended the Council of Florence as Archbishop of Nicea. Eugenius IV., by making him a cardinal in 1439, converted him to the Latin faith; and, as it so happened, he

missed the Papacy almost by an accident thirty-two years later.<sup>37</sup> His palace at Rome became the meeting-place of scholars of all nations,<sup>38</sup> where refugee Greeks in particular were sure of finding hearty welcome. In obedience to the reigning passion for book-collecting, he got together a considerable library of Greek and Latin authors, the number of which Vespasiano estimated at 600 volumes, while Platina reckoned their total cost at 30,000 scudi. In 1468 he offered this collection to the Church of S. Mark at Venice. The Republic accepted his gift, but showed no alacrity to build the library. It was not until the next century that Bessarion's books were finally housed according to their dignity.<sup>39</sup> The Cardinal's own studies lay in the direction of theological philosophy. We have already seen that in his youth he was a pupil of Gemistos, and he now appears as the defender of Plato. Georgios Trapezuntios had published a treatise in the year 1458, in which, on the pretence of upholding Aristotle, he vilified Plato's moral character, accused him of having ruined Greece, and maintained that Mahomet was a far better legislator. Bessarion replied by the oration 'In Calumniatorem Platonis,' vindicating the morality of the philosopher and supporting him against Aristotle. This book was printed by Sweynheim and Pannartz in the infancy of the Roman press. Theodoros Gaza,<sup>40</sup> who, on his settlement in Rome in 1450, had been received into Bessarion's household, entered the lists with a critique of Gemistos; to which Bessarion replied: and so the warfare begun by Gennadios at Byzantium was continued by the Greek exiles at Rome. The titles of the works issued in this contest, among which we find 'De Naturâ et Arte,' 'Utrum Natura Consilio Agat,' 'Comparationes Philosophorum Aristotelis et Platonis,' sufficiently indicate the extent of ground traversed. The chief result was the rousing of Italian scholars to weightier points of issue in philosophy than had at first been raised by mystical Neo-platonists and pedantic Peripatetics.

Among the Greeks protected by Bessarion, passing notice may be made of Andronicus Callistus, whose lectures found less favour at Rome than they afterwards obtained at Florence, where he had the great Poliziano for his pupil. He was one of the first of the Greeks to seek fortune in France.<sup>41</sup> Nor must Demetrius Chalcondylas be omitted, who fled from Byzantium to Rome about the year 1447, and afterwards professed Greek in the University of Perugia. A letter written by one of his pupils, Gian Antonio Campano,<sup>42</sup> gives such an agreeable impression of the effect he produced in the city of the Baglioni that

<sup>37</sup> Vespasiano, p. 146.

<sup>38</sup> See Platina's panegyric, quoted by Tiraboschi, vol. vi. lib. i. cap. 3, 22. Platina and Perotti were among his Italian *protégés*.

<sup>39</sup> A striking instance of the want of literary enthusiasm at Venice.

<sup>40</sup> He first came to Italy in 1430, professed Greek at Ferrara from 1441 to 1450, and died in Campania about 1478. He translated many works of Aristotle. His own book on Grammar was printed by Aldus in 1495.

<sup>41</sup> Raffaello Volaterrano, quoted by Tiraboschi, vol. vi. lib. iii. cap. 2, 16.

<sup>42</sup> See Tiraboschi, vol. vi. lib. iii. cap. 2, 17.



I will translate a portion of it. 'A Greek has just arrived, who has begun to teach me with great pains, and I to listen to his precepts with incredible pleasure, because he is a Greek, because he is Athenian, and because he is Demetrius. It seems to me that in him is figured all the wisdom, the civility, and the elegance of those so famous and illustrious ancients. Merely seeing him, you fancy you are looking on Plato; far more when you hear him speak.' It was a young man of twenty-three who wrote this, the companion, probably, of such magnificent youths as Signorelli loved to paint and Matarazzo to describe.<sup>43</sup> It is interesting to compare this letter with the panegyric passed upon Ognibene da Lonigo five years after his death by Bartolommeo Pagello in an oration delivered at Vicenza. The young men of Vicenza, said the rhetorician, left their dice, their duels, their wine cups, and their loves to listen to this humanist; his learning wrought a reformation in the morals of the town.<sup>44</sup> Such were the fascinations of scholarship in the fifteenth century.

The Greeks hitherto mentioned quitted their country before the capture of Constantinople. It is, therefore, wrong to ascribe to that event the importation of Hellenic studies into Italy. Their Italian pupils carried on the work they had begun, with wider powers and nobler energy. All the great Grecians of the third age of humanism are Italians. Florence received learning from Byzantium at the very moment when the Greek Empire was about to be extinguished, and spread it far and wide through Europe, herself achieving by far the largest and most arduous portion of the task.

In passing down to Naples, we find a marked change in the external conditions under which literature flourished. Men of learning at the Courts of Italy occupied a position different from that of their brethren in the Papal Chancery. They had to suit their habits to the customs of the Court and camp, to place their talents at the service of their patron's pleasure, to entertain him in his hours of idleness, to frame compliments and panegyrics, and to repay his bounty by the celebration of his deeds in histories and poems. Their footing was less official, more subject to the temper and caprices of the reigning sovereign, than at Rome; while the peculiar advantages, both political and social, which, even under the sway of the Medicean family, made Florence a real republic of letters, existed in no other town of Italy.

At Naples there was no such thing as native culture. The semi-feudal nobility of the South were addicted to field sports, feats of arms, and idleness. The people of the country were sunk in barbarism. In the cities there was no middle class analogous to that of the more northerly republics. Nevertheless, the kingdom of the Two Sicilies played an important part in the development of Italian literature. While the Mussulmans held sway at Palermo, Sicily was the most re-

<sup>43</sup> See my *Sketches in Italy and Greece*, article 'Perugia.'

<sup>44</sup> Tiraboschi, vol. vi. lib. iii. cap. 5, 46.

financed and enlightened state of Southern Europe. Under the Norman dynasty this Arabic civilisation began to influence North Italy, and during the reign of Frederick II. Naples bade fair to become the city of illumination for the modern world. The failure of Frederick's attempt to restore life to arts and letters in the thirteenth century belongs to the history of his warfare with the Church. What his courtiers effected for the earliest poetry of the Italians is told by Dante in the treatise 'De Vulgari Eloquentia.' For our present purpose it is enough to notice that the zeal for knowledge planted by the Arabs, tolerated by the Normans, and fostered by the House of Hohenstauffen in the south of Italy, was an exotic which took no deep root in the people. No national poem was produced in the golden age of Frederick's brief supremacy; no stories are told of Neapolitan carters and boatmen reciting the sonnets of his courtiers. As culture began, so it continued to exist at Naples—flourishing at intervals in close connection with the sovereign's taste, and owing to local influences not life and vigour, but colour and complexion, suavity and softness, caught from the surrounding beauties of the sea and shore.

Each of the dynasties which held the throne of the Two Sicilies could boast a patron of literature. Robert of Anjou was proud to call himself the friend of Petrarch, and Boccaccio found the flame of inspiration at his Court.<sup>45</sup> In the second age of humanism, with which we are now occupied, Alfonso of Aragon deserved the praise bestowed on him by Vespasiano of being, next to Nicholas V., the most munificent promoter of learning.<sup>46</sup> His love of letters was genuine. After making all deductions for the flattery of official historiographers, it is clear that Alfonso found his most enduring satisfaction in the company of students, listening to their debates on points of scholarship, attending their public lectures, employing them in the perusal of ancient poets and historians, insisting on their presence in his camp, and freely supplying them with money for the purchase of books and for their maintenance while engaged in works of erudition. Vespasiano relates that Beccadelli's daily readings to his master were not interrupted during the campaign of 1443, when Alfonso took the field against Francesco Sforza's armies in the March.<sup>47</sup> The Neapolitan captains might be seen gathered round their monarch, listening to the scholar's exposition of Livy, instead of wasting their leisure at games of hazard. Beccadelli himself professes to have cured an illness of Alfonso's in three days by reading aloud to him Curtius's Life of Alexander, while Lorenzo Valla describes the concourse of students to his table during the recitation of Virgil or of Terence.<sup>48</sup> Courtiers with no taste for scholarship were excluded from these literary meetings; but free access was given to poor youths who sought to profit

<sup>45</sup> I may refer to Petrarch's Letters *passim*, and to the solemn peroration of the *Africa*.

<sup>46</sup> See Vol. I., *Age of the Despots*, pp. 285, 286.

<sup>47</sup> *Vita di Alfonso*, p. 59. *Vita di Manetti*, p. 451.

<sup>48</sup> See Tiraboschi, vol. vi. lib. i. cap. 2, 17.

by the learning of the lecturers. The king, meantime, sat at meat, now and then handing fruits or confectionery to refresh the reader when his voice seemed failing. His passion for the antique assumed the romantic character common in that age. When the Venetians sent him one of the recently discovered bones of Livy, he received it like the relic of a saint; nor could the fears of his physicians prevent him from opening and reading the MS. of Livy forwarded from Florence by Cosimo de' Medici, who was then suspected of wishing to poison him. On his military excursions he never neglected the famous sites of antiquity, saluting the *genius loci* with pious thanks at Ovid's birthplace, and expressly forbidding his engineers to trespass on the site of Cicero's villa at Gaeta.<sup>49</sup> Alfonso was no less assiduous than his contemporaries in the collection of books. The Palace library at Naples was his favourite place of recreation; here Giannozzo Manetti found him among his scholars on the famous occasion when the king sat through a long congratulatory oration like a brazen statue, without so much as brushing away the flies that settled on his face. His MSS. were dispersed when Charles VIII. occupied Naples, and what became of them is doubtful.<sup>50</sup>

Among the humanists who stood nearest to the person of this monarch, Antonio Beccadelli, called from his birthplace Il Panormita, deserves the first place. Born at Palermo in 1394, he received his education at Siena, where he was a fellow-student with Æneas Sylvius Piccolomini. The city of Siena, *molles Senæ*, as the poet himself called it, was notorious throughout Italy for luxury of living. Here, therefore, it may be presumed that Beccadelli in his youth enjoyed the experiences which he afterwards celebrated in 'Hermaphroditus.'<sup>51</sup> Nothing is more striking in that amazing collection of elegies than the frankness of their author, the free and liberal delight with which he dwells on shameless sensualities, and the pride with which he publishes his own name to the world. Dedicated to Cosimo de' Medici, welcomed with applause by the grey-headed Guarino da Verona,<sup>52</sup> extolled to the skies by Antonio Losco, eagerly sought after by Bartolommeo, Bishop of Milan—this book, which Strato and Martial might have blushed to own, passed from copyist to copyist, from hand to hand. Among the learned it found no serious adversaries. Poggio, indeed, gently reminded the poet that even the elegance of its Latinity and the heat of its author's youth were hardly sufficient excuses for its wantonness.<sup>53</sup> Yet the almost unanimous verdict of students was favourable. Its open animalism, as free from satire as from concealment, took the

<sup>49</sup> Pontano, *De Principe*, and Panormita, *De Dictis et Factis Alphonsi Regis*, furnish these anecdotes.

<sup>50</sup> The MS. of Livy referred to above is now in the library at Holkham; see Roscoe's *Lorenzo*, p. 389.

<sup>51</sup> Published at Paris in 1791 among *Quinque illustrium Poetarum Lusui in Venerum*, and again at Coburg in 1824, with annotations by F. G. Forberg.

<sup>52</sup> A man of about sixty-three, and father of twelve legitimate children.

<sup>53</sup> *Poggii Opera*, pp. 349-354.

world by storm; while the facile elegance of fluent verse with which the sins of Sodom and Gomorrha were described placed it, in the opinion of scholars, on a level with Catullus.<sup>54</sup> When the Emperor Sigismund crowned Beccadelli poet at Siena in 1433, he only added the weight of Imperial approval to the verdict of the lettered public.

The Church could not, however, tolerate the scandal. Ever since the days of Petrarch and Boccaccio, monks had regarded the study of antique poetry with suspicion. Now their worst fears were realised. Beccadelli had proved that the vices of nascent Paganism were not only corrupting Italian society in secret, but that a young scholar of genius could openly proclaim his participation in the shame, abjure the first principles of Christian morality, and appeal with confidence to princes and humanists for sympathy. The Minorite Friars denounced the 'Hermaphroditus' from their pulpits, and burned it, together with portraits of the poet, on the public squares of Bologna, Milan, and Ferrara.<sup>55</sup> Eugenius IV. proscribed the reading of it under penalty of excommunication. Dignitaries of the Church, who found it in the hands of their secretaries, did not scruple to tear it to pieces, as a book forbidden by the Pope and contrary to sound morality.<sup>56</sup> Yet all this made but little difference to Beccadelli's reputation.<sup>57</sup> He lectured with honour at Bologna and Pavia, received a stipend of 800 scudi from the Visconti, and in 1435 was summoned to the Court of Naples. Alfonso raised him to the rank of noble, and continually employed him near his person, enjoying his wit, and taking special delight in his readings of classic authors. As official historiographer, Beccadelli committed to writing the memorable deeds and sayings of his royal master.<sup>58</sup> As ambassador and orator, he represented the King at foreign Courts. As tutor to the Crown Prince, Ferdinand, he prepared a sovereign for the State of Naples. This favour lasted till the year 1471, when he died, old, rich, and respected, in his lovely villa by the Bay of Naples. A more signal instance of the value attached in this age to pure scholarship, irrespective of moral considerations, and apart from profound learning—since Beccadelli was, after all, only an elegant Latinist—

<sup>54</sup> Poggio, while professing to condemn the scandals of these poems, writes thus:—'*Delectatus sum mehercle varietate rerum et elegantia versuum, simulque admiratus sum res adeo impudicas, adeo ineptas, tam venuste, tam composite, a te dici, atque ita multa exprimi turpiuscula ut non enarrari sed agi videantur, nec ficta a te jocandi causa, ut existimo, sed acta existimari possint.*'—*Poggii Opera*, p. 349.

<sup>55</sup> Especially Bernardino da Siena, Roberto da Lecce, and Alberto da Sarteano. See the note to p. 227 of Vol. I., *Age of the Despots*.

<sup>56</sup> See Vespasiano, *Vita di Guiliamo Cesarini*, p. 134.

<sup>57</sup> A curious letter from Guarino to Beccadelli (Rosmini's *Vita di Guarino*, vol. ii. p. 44, and notes, p. 171) describes the enthusiastic reception given in public to an impostor who pretended to be the author of *Hermaphroditus*.

<sup>58</sup> *De Dictis et Factis Alphonsi Regis Memorabilibus*. Æneas Sylvius wrote a commentary on this work, in the preface to which he says, '*Legere potui, quod feci, corrigere vero non potui; nam quid est quod manu tuâ emissum correctione indigeat?*'—*Opp. Omnia*, p. 472. This proves Beccadelli's reputation as a stylist.

cannot be adduced. The 'Hermaphroditus,' therefore, deserves a prominent place in the history of Renaissance manners.

Those among us who have had the curiosity to study Beccadelli's 'Hermaphroditus' will find sufficient food for reflection upon his post of confidence and honour at the Court of Alfonso.<sup>59</sup> Yet the position of Lorenzo Valla at the same Court is even more remarkable. While Beccadelli urged the levity of youth in extenuation of his heathenism, and spoke with late regret of his past follies,<sup>60</sup> Valla showed the steady front of a deliberate critic, hostile at all points to the traditions and the morals of the Church. The parents of this remarkable man were natives of Piacenza, though, having probably been born at Rome, he assumed to himself the attribute of Roman.<sup>61</sup> Before he fixed his residence at Naples, he had already won distinction by a 'Dialogue on Pleasure,' in which he contrasted the principles of the Stoics and Epicureans, making it clear, in spite of cautious reservation, that he upheld the rights of the flesh in opposition to the teaching of philosophies and Churches. The virtue of virginity, so strongly prized by Christian saints, was treated by him as a violence to nature's laws, an intolerable torment inflicted upon man as God has made him.<sup>62</sup>

The attack opened by Valla upon the hypocrises and false doctrines of monasticism was both powerful and novel. Humanistic freedom of thought, after assuming the form of witty persiflage in Poggio's anecdotes and appearing as pure Paganism in Beccadelli's poems, now put on the sterner mask of common sense and criticism in Lorenzo Valla. The arms which he assumed in his first encounter with Church doctrine, he never laid aside. To the end of his life Valla remained the steady champion of unbiased criticism, the living incarnation of that 'verneinder Geist' to which the reason of the modern world has owed its motive force.

Before leaving Rome at the age of twenty-four, Valla tried to get the post of Apostolic Secretary, but without success. It is probable that his youth told less against him than his reputation for plain speech and fearlessness. In 1431 we hear of him at Pavia, where, according to the slanders of his enemies,<sup>63</sup> he forged a will and underwent public penance at the order of the Bishop. This, however, is just one of those stories on which the general character of the invectives that contain it, throws uncertainty. Far more to our purpose is the fact that at this

<sup>59</sup> What the biographers, especially Vespasiano, relate of Alfonso's ceremonious piety and love of theological reading makes the contrast between him and his Court poet truly astounding.

<sup>60</sup> *'Hic facies varias Veneris moresque profanos,  
Quos natura fugit, me docuisse pudet.'*

<sup>61</sup> *'Romam, in quâ natus sum . . . ego sum ortus Romæ oriundus a Placentiâ.'*

<sup>62</sup> The naïve surprise with which Vespasiano records the fact of virginity (see especially the Lives of Ambrogio Traversari and the Cardinal Portogallo) shows how rare the virtue was, and what mysterious honour it conferred upon men who were reputed to be chaste.

<sup>63</sup> Poggio and Fazio are the authorities for this incident.

period he became the supreme authority on points of Latin style by the publication of his 'Elegantiae.' True to his own genius, Valla displayed in this masterly treatise the qualities that gave him a place unique among the scholars of his day. The forms of correct Latinity which other men had picked out as they best could by close adherence to antique models, he subjected to critical analysis, establishing the art of style on scientific principles.

When Alfonso invited Valla to Naples in 1437, giving him the post of private secretary, together with the poet's crown, he must have known the nature of the man who was to play so prominent a part in the history of free thought. It is not improbable that the feud between the House of Aragon and the Papal See, which arose from Alfonso's imperfect title to the throne of Naples, and was embittered by the intrigues of the Church, disposed the King to look with favour on the uncompromising antagonist of Papacy. At all events, Valla's treatise on 'Constantine's Donation,' which appeared in 1440, assumed the character of a political pamphlet.<sup>64</sup> The exordium contained fierce personal abuse of Eugenius IV. and Cardinal Vitelleschi. The body of the tract destroyed the fabric of lies which had imposed upon the Christian world for centuries. The peroration ended with a menace. Worse chastisement was in store for a worldly and simoniacal priesthood, if the Popes refused to forego their usurped temporalities, and to confess the sham that criticism had unmasked. War to the death was thus declared between Valla and Rome. The storm his treatise excited, raged at first so wildly that Valla thought it prudent to take flight. He crossed the sea to Barcelona, and remained there a short while, until, being assured of Alfonso's protection, he once more returned to Naples. From beneath the shield of his royal patron, he now continued to shoot arrow after arrow at his enemies, affirming that the letter of Christ to Abgarus, reported by Eusebius, was a palpable forgery, exposing the bad Latin style of the Vulgate, accusing S. Augustine of heresy on the subject of predestination, and denying the authenticity of the Apostle's Creed. That a simple humanist, trusting only to his learning, should have dared to attack the strong places of orthodoxy—its temporalities, its favourite code of ethics, its creed, and its patristic authorities—may well excite our admiration. With the stones of criticism and the sling of rhetoric, this David went up against the Goliath of the Church; and though he could not slay the Philistine, he planted in his forehead the first of those many missiles with which the battery of the reason has assailed tyrannical traditions in the modern world.

The friars whom Valla attacked with frigid scorn, and whose empire over the minds of men he was engaged in undermining, could not be expected to leave him quiet. Sermons from all the pulpits of Italy were launched at the heretic and heathen; the people were taught to loathe him as a monster of iniquity; and finally a Court of Inquisition

<sup>64</sup> *De falso Creditū et Ementitū Constantini Donatione.*

was opened, at the bar of which he was summoned to attend. To the interrogatories of the inquisitors Valla replied that 'he believed as Mother Church believed: it was quite true that she *knew* nothing: yet he believed as she believed.' That was all they could extract from the disdainful scholar, who, after openly defying them, walked away to the king and besought him to suspend the sitting of the Court. Alfonso told the monks that they must leave his secretary alone, and the process was dropped.

On the death of Eugenius, Nicholas V. summoned Valla to Rome, not to answer for his heresies and insults at the Papal bar, but to receive the post of Apostolic Writer, with magnificent appointments. The entry of Valla into the Roman Curia, though marked by no external ceremony, was the triumph of humanism over orthodoxy and tradition. We need not suppose that Nicholas was seeking to bribe a dangerous antagonist to silence. He simply wanted to attach an illustrious scholar to his Court, and to engage him in the labour of translation from the Greek. To heresy and scepticism he showed the indifference of a tolerant and enlightened spirit; with the friars who hated Valla the Pope in Rome had nothing whatsoever in common. The attitude assumed by Nicholas on this occasion illustrates the benefit which learning in the Renaissance derived from the worldliness of the Papacy. It was not until the schism of the Teutonic Churches, and the intrusion of the Spaniards into Italy, that the Court of Rome consistently adopted a policy of persecution and repression.

A large portion of Valla's biography is absorbed by the history of his quarrels with Poggio, Georgios Trapezuntios, and other men of mark. Enough has already been said about these literary feuds; nor need I allude to them again, except for the purpose of bringing a third Court-scholar of Alfonso's into notice. Bartolommeo Fazio, a native of La Spezia, occupied the position of historiographer at Naples. In addition to his annals of the life of Alfonso, he compiled a book on celebrated men, and won the reputation of being the neatest Latinist in prose of his age. Fazio ventured to criticise the style of Valla, in whose works he professed to have detected five hundred faults of language. Eight books of invectives and recriminations were exchanged between them; and when both died in 1457, this epigram was composed in celebration of their animosity:—

Ne vel in Elysiis sine vindice Valla susurret,  
Faciis haud multos post obit ipse dies.

The amusement afforded to Roman emperors by fights in the arena, and to feudal nobles by the squabbles of their fools, seems to have been extracted by Italian patrons from the duels of well-matched humanists. What personal jealousies, what anxious competition for the princely favour, such warfare concealed may be readily imagined; nor is it improbable that Fazio's attack on Valla was prompted by the covert spite



of Beccadelli. Scarcely less close to the person of Alfonso than the students with whom we have been occupied, stood Giannantonio Porcello, a native of Naples. He was distinguished by his command of versification: the fluency with which he poured fourth Latin elegiacs and hexameters approached that of an improvisatore of the Molo. Alfonso sent him to the camp of the Venetians during the war waged by their general Piccinino in 1452-3 with Sforza. Porcello, who shared the tent of Piccinino on this occasion, wrote a Latin history of the campaign, in the style of Livy, with moral reflections, speeches, and all the apparatus of Roman rhetoric. Piccinino figured as Scipio Æmilianus; Sforza as Hannibal. The work was dedicated to Alfonso.<sup>65</sup>

With the exception of Lorenzo Valla,<sup>66</sup> the scholars of the Court of Naples were stylists and poets rather than men of erudition. Freedom both of speculation and of morals marked society in Southern Italy, where the protection of a powerful monarch at war with the Church, and the license of a luxurious capital, released the humanists from such slight restraints as public opinion and conventional decorum placed on them in Rome and Florence.

Owing to the marked diversity exhibited by the different states of Italy, the forms assumed by art and literature are never exactly the same in any two cities. If the natives of the Two Sicilies were not themselves addicted to severe scholarship, the lighter kinds of writing flourished there abundantly, and Naples gave her own peculiar character to literature. This was not the case with Milan. Yet Milan, during the reigns of the last Visconti and the first Sforza, claims attention, owing to the accident of Filelfo's residence at the Ducal Court. Filippo Maria Visconti was one of the most repulsive tyrants who have ever disgraced a civilised country. Shut up within his palace walls among astrologers, minions, and monks, carefully protected from the public eye, and watched by double sets of mutually suspicious bodyguards, it was impossible that he should extend the free encouragement to learned men which we admire at Naples. Around despots of the stamp of the Visconti there must of necessity reign the solitude and silence of a desert, where arts and letters cannot flourish, though Pactolus be poured forth to feed their roots. The history of humanism at Milan has, therefore, less to do with the city or the Ducal circle than with the private labours of students allured to Lombardy by promise of high pay.

Piero Candido Decembrio began life as Filippo Maria's secretary. To his vigorous pen the student of Italian history owes the minutest and most vivid sketch now extant of the habits and the vices of a tyrant. This remains the best title of Decembrio to recollection, though his works, original and translated, if we may trust his epitaph in S. Ambrogio, amounted to 127 books when he died in 1447. Contemporary

<sup>65</sup> It is printed in Muratori, vol. xx.

<sup>66</sup> The protection extended to Manetti and to Filelfo ought, however, to be here mentioned. Nearly all the contemporary scholars of Italy dedicated works to Alfonso.

with Decembrio, Gasparino da Barzizza, of whom mention has already been made,<sup>67</sup> occupied the place of Court orator and letter-writer. This office he transmitted to his son, Guiniforte, who was also employed in the education of Francesco Sforza's children. None of these men, however, shed much splendour upon Milan; they were simply the instruments of ducal luxury, part of a prince's parade, at an epoch when even warlike sovereigns sought to crowd their Courts with pedagogues and rhetoricians.

With Filelfo the case was different. His singular abilities rendered him independent of local patronage, and drew universal attention to any place where he might choose to fix his residence. Of all the humanists he was the most restless in his humour and erratic in his movements. Still Milan, during a long period of his life, formed his head-quarters; to Milan he returned when fortune frowned on him elsewhere; and with Milan his name will always be connected.

Francesco Filelfo was born in 1398 at Tolentino, in the March of Ancona. He studied grammar, rhetoric, and Latin literature at Padua, where he was appointed professor at the early age of eighteen. In 1417 he received an invitation to teach eloquence and moral philosophy at Venice. Here he remained two years, deriving much advantage from the society of Guarino da Verona and Vittorino da Feltre, and forming useful connections with the Venetian nobility. Young as he was, Filelfo had already made his mark, and won the consideration which attaches to men of decided character and extraordinary powers. The proof of this is that, after being admitted citizen of Venice by public decree, he was appointed Secretary to the Bailly (*Baillo*, or Consul-General) of Constantinople through the interest of his friend Lionardo Giustiniani. Giustiniani having also provided him with money for his voyage, Filelfo set off in 1419 for the capital of Greek learning. Of the three Italian teachers—Guarino, Aurispa, and Filelfo—who made this journey for the express purpose of acquiring the Greek language and collecting Greek books, Filelfo was by far the most distinguished. The history, therefore, of his adventures may be taken as a specimen of what befell them all. The time spent at sea between Venice and Byzantium was five months; Filelfo did not arrive till the year 1420 was already well advanced. He put himself at once under the tuition of John Chrysoloras, the brother of Manuel, whose influence at the Imperial Court brought Filelfo into favour with John Palæologus. The young Italian student, having speedily acquired familiarity with the Greek tongue, received the titles of Secretary and Counsellor, and executed some important diplomatic missions for his Imperial master. We hear, for instance, of his being sent to Sigismund, the German Emperor, at Buda, and of his reciting an Epithalamial Oration at Cracow on the marriage of King Ladislaus. The Venetian Bailly, again, despatched him to the Court of Amurath II., in order to negotiate terms of treaty between the Republic and the Turk.

<sup>67</sup> Above, p. 378.

The confidence extended alike by his Venetian and Greek patrons to Filelfo may well have inclined Chrysoloras to look with favour on the affection which now sprang up between the Italian stranger and his daughter Theodora. Theodora was but fourteen years of age; yet her youth probably suggested no impediment to marriage in the semi-Oriental society of the Greek capital. That she was connected by blood with the Imperial family made the alliance honourable to Filelfo; still there is no sufficient reason to conclude for certain that the match was so unequal as to justify the malignant suggestion thrown out at a later date by Poggio.<sup>68</sup> Of ancient blood there was enough and to spare at Constantinople; but wealth was wanting, while the talent which rendered Filelfo serviceable to great states and empires was itself sufficient guarantee for Theodora's maintenance in a becoming station.

Not long after their marriage Filelfo received an offer of the Chair of Eloquence at Venice, with a stipend of 500 sequins. In 1427, tempted by the prospect of good pay and growing fame, he landed with his wife, their infant son, four female slaves, and two men servants on the quay before S. Mark's.<sup>69</sup> The object of his journey to Constantinople had been amply attained. After an absence of seven and a half years, he returned to his native country with Greek learning, increased reputation, and a large supply of Greek books.<sup>70</sup> His proud boast, fre-

<sup>68</sup> *Itaque Chrysoloras, mœrore confectus, compulsus precibus, malo coactus, filiam tibi nuptui dedit a te corruptam, quæ si extitisset integra, ne pilum quidem tibi abraham ab illius natibus ostendisset. An tu illam unquam duxisses uxorem si virginitatem per te servare potuisses? Tibi pater illam dedisset profugo, ignobili, impuro? Primarius suæ civitatis viris servabatur virgo, non tibi, insulsæ pecudi et asello bipedali, quem ille domi alebat tanquam canem aliquem solent senio et ætate confectum.*—*Poggii Opp.* p. 167. This is just one of the tales with which the invectives of that day abound, and with which it is almost impossible to deal. It may be true; for certainly Filelfo, by his immorality and grossness in after-life, justified the worst calumnies that his enemies could invent. Yet there is little but Poggio's word to prove it, while Rosmini has shown that Filelfo's position at Byzantium was very different from what his foe suggests. Tiraboschi accepts the charge as 'not proven,' but he clearly leans in private against Filelfo, moved by the following passage from a letter of Ambrogio Traversari:—*'Nuper a Guarino accepi litteras, quibus vehementer in fortunam invehitur quod filiam Joannis Chrysoloræ clarissimi viri is acceperit, exterus, qui quantum libet homo bono ingenio, longe tamen illis nuptiis impar esset, queriturque subtomachans exorem Chrysoloræ venalem habuisse pudicitiam, mœchumque ante habuisse quam socerum.'* Vol. vi. lib. iii. cap. v. 21. All that can be said now is that Filelfo's own morality and the corruption of Byzantine society render a story believed by Guarino and Traversari, and openly told by Poggio, not improbable.

<sup>69</sup> This retinue shows that Filelfo was at least able to support a large household.

<sup>70</sup> The catalogue of his library, communicated by him in a letter to Ambrogio Traversari, shows so clearly what the most indefatigable student and omnivorous reader of the age, to whom all the museums and bookshops of Byzantium must have been open, could then collect, that I will transcribe it:—*'Qui mihi nostri in Italiam libri gesti sunt, horum nomina ad te scribo: alios autem nonnullos per primas ex Byzantio Venetorum naves opporior. Hi autem sunt Plotinus, Ælianus, Aristides, Dionysius Halicarnasseus, Strabo Geographus, Hermogenes, Aristotelis Rhetorice, Dionysius Halicarnasseus de Numeris et Characteribus, Herodotus, Dio Chrysostomus, Apollonius Pergæus, Thucydides, Plutarchi Moralia, Proclus in Platonem, Philo Judæus, Ethica Aristotelis, Ejus magna Moralia et Eudemia, et Œconomica et Politica, quæ-*

quently repeated in after-life, that no man living but himself had mastered the whole literature of the ancients in both languages, that no one else could wield the prose of Cicero, the verse of Horace and of Virgil, and the Greek of Homer and of Xenophon with equal versatility, was not altogether an empty vaunt.<sup>71</sup> We may indeed smile at his pretension to have surpassed Virgil because he was an orator, and Cicero because he was a poet, and both of them together because he could write Greek as well as Latin.<sup>72</sup> We know that his Latin hexameters are such as not only Virgil but Cicero would have scorned to own, that his Latin orations would have been hissed before the Roman rostra, and that his Greek style is at the same time tame and tumid. Neither he nor his contemporaries were sufficiently critical to comprehend the force of these objections. They only saw that he possessed the keys to all the learning of the ancient world, and that, besides unlocking those treasures for modern students, he was also competent to give to current thoughts a form that aped the classic masterpieces each in its own kind. Taken at their lowest valuation, the claims of Filelfo, well founded in fact, mark him out as the most universal scholar of his age. A genius he was not: for while his perceptions were coarse, his intellect was receptive rather than originative. Of deep thought, true taste, penetrative criticism, or delicate fancy he knew nothing. The unimaginable bloom of style is nowhere to be found upon his work. Yet a man of his stamp was needed at that epoch to act as a focus for the streams of light which flooded Italy from divers sources, to collect them in himself, and to bequeath to students of a happier age the ideal of comprehensive scholarship which Poliziano and Erasmus realised.

Filelfo's reception at Venice by no means corresponded to the prom-

dam Theophrasti Opuscula, Homeri Ilias, Odyssea, Philostrati de Vitâ Appollonii, Orationes Libanii, et aliqui Sermones Luciani, Pindarus, Aratus, Euripidis Tragediæ Septem, Theocritus, Hesiodus, Suidas, Phalaridis, Hippocratis, Platonis et multorum ex veteribus Philosophis Epistolæ, Demosthenes, Æschinis Orationes et Epistolæ, Pleraque Xenophontis Opera, Una Lysiae Oratio, Orphei Argonautica et Hymni, Callimachus, Aristoteles de Historiis Animalium, Physica, et Metaphysica, et de Animâ, de Partibus Animalium, et alia quedam, Polybius, Nonnulli Sermones Chrysostomi, Dionysiaca, et alii Poetæ plurimi. Habes qui mihi sint, et his utere eque ac tuis.'

<sup>71</sup> 'Unum Philelphus audent affirmare, vel insaniente Candido, neminem esse hâc tempestate, nec fuisse unquam apud Latinos, quantum constat ex omni hominum memoriâ, qui præter se unum idem unus tenuerit exercuitque et Græcam pariter et Latinam orationem in omni dicendi genere et prosâ et versu. Tu si quidem habeas alterum, memora. Quid taces, homo miserrime?' Letter to Piero Candido Decembrio. Cf. what P. C. Decembrio wrote to Poggio in 1453:—'Dixit (i.e. Philelphus) enim neminem litteras scire præter ipsum, alios semilatinos et semigræcos esse, se autem principatum inter stultos obtinere.' Rosmini, vol. iii. p. 150.

<sup>72</sup> 'Quod si Virgilius superat me carminis ullis

Laudibus, orator ille ego sum melior.

Sin Tulli eloquio præstat facundia nostro,

Versibus ille meis cedit ubique minor.

Adde quod et linguâ possum hæc præstare Pelasgâ

Et Latîâ. Talem quem mihi des alium?'

Lib. ix., *De Jocis et Seris. Elegy to Alessandro Sforza*. Reported by Rosmini, vol. iii. p. 149. One specimen of these boasts may stand for thousands.

ises by which he had been tempted, or to the value which he set on his own services. The plague was in the city; the nobles had taken flight to their country houses; and there was no one to attend his lectures. He therefore very readily accepted an offer sent him from Bologna, and early in the year 1428 we find him settled in that city as professor of eloquence and moral philosophy, with a stipend of 450 sequins. He was not destined to remain there long, however, for the disturbed state of the town rendered teaching impossible; and when flattering proposals arrived from the Florentines, he set off in haste and transferred his whole family across the Apennines from Imola.<sup>73</sup> The delight which he experienced in viewing the architectural monuments of Florence, and the enthusiasm he aroused by his stupendous learning in an audience of unprecedented variety and multitude, are expressed with almost childish emphasis in his correspondence. 'The whole State,' he writes,<sup>74</sup> 'is turned to look at me. All men love and honour me, and praise me to the skies. My name is on every lip. Not only the leaders of the city, but women also of the noblest birth make way for me, paying me so much respect that I am ashamed of their worship. My audience numbers every day four hundred persons, mostly men advanced in years and of the dignity of senators.' These were the halcyon days of Filelfo's residence at Florence,<sup>75</sup> when he was still enjoying the friendship of learned men, receiving new engagements from the University with augmentations of pay,<sup>76</sup> and when as yet he had not won the hatred of the Medicean faction. His industry at this epoch was amazing. He began the day by reading and explaining the 'Tusculans' and rhetorical treatises of Cicero; then he proceeded to Livy or Homer; after a brief rest at midday he resumed his labours with Terence and a Greek author, Thucydides or Xenophon. On holidays he read Dante to an audience assembled in the Duomo, bestowing these lectures as a free gift on the people of Florence. Amid these public labours, the weight of which may be estimated by remembering what was required of professors in the fifteenth century,<sup>77</sup> Filelfo still found leisure for private work. He translated two speeches of Lysias, the 'Rhetoric' of Aristotle, two Lives of Plutarch, and Xenophon's panegyrics of Agesilaus and the Spartan institutions.

At the same time he had abundant energy for the prosecution of the feuds in which he soon found himself engaged with the Florentine scholars. So great was the arrogance displayed by Filelfo, his meanness in private life, and his impudence in public,<sup>78</sup> that even the men

<sup>73</sup> The invitation came from Niccoli, Lionardo Bruni, Ambrogio Traversari, and Palla Strozzi.

<sup>74</sup> Quoted by Cantù, p. 128.

<sup>75</sup> He stayed there from 1429 till the autumn of 1434.

<sup>76</sup> Engagement renewed October 17, 1431, for two years, with stipend of 350 sequins; again, in 1433, with stipend of 450 sequins.

<sup>77</sup> See above, pp. 387, 388.

<sup>78</sup> See Rosmini, vol. i. pp. 43, 48.

who had invited him became his bitter foes. Niccolo de' Niccoli, always jealous of superiority, and apt to take offence, was the first with whom he quarrelled; then followed Carlo Marsuppini and Ambrogio Traversari, until at last the whole of the Medicean party were inflamed against him. Filelfo on his side spared neither satires nor slanders; and when the political crisis, which for a time depressed the Medicean faction, was impending, he declared himself the public opponent of Cosimo. Already in the spring of 1433 he had been stabbed in the face while walking to the University one morning by Filippo, a cut-throat from Casale; nor does there seem any reason to doubt that, as Filelfo himself firmly believed, the man was paid to kill him by the Medici. When the same bravo afterwards followed him to Siena,<sup>79</sup> Filelfo hired a Greek, by name Antonio Maria, to retaliate upon his foes in Florence. It is not probable that a merely literary quarrel would have run to these extremities. Even the foulness of Poggio's invectives and the fury of Filelfo's satires fail to account for the intervention of assassins. We know, however, that Filelfo had not confined himself to calumnies and criticisms of his literary rivals. During Cosimo's imprisonment he urged the Signory in open terms to take his life; when he was living in exile at Venice, he pursued him with abominable slanders; and now, on Cosimo's return, though himself expelled from the city as a rebel and a proscrip, he kept stirring up the burghers of Florence and the Courts of Italy against the tyrant.<sup>80</sup>

The occasion of Filelfo's removal to Siena was this:—When his position at Florence had become untenable, he received an invitation from Antonio Petrucci to lecture for two years, with a stipend of 350 florins. Filelfo replied that he preferred small pay and quiet to a larger income among the swords and poisons of his envious rivals. Accordingly he took up his abode at Siena for four years in the Piccolomini Palace. Like many greater and more admirable men, he had a restless disposition, always pleased with what is new, yet always grumbling when the taste of bitter mounted to his lips. The most honourable invitations now

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 83, for the trial, torture, and confession of this bravo.

<sup>80</sup> The original source of information concerning Filelfo's quarrels with the Florentines is his *Satires*, divided into ten books or decades, each consisting of ten satires or hecatostichæ of one hundred verses each. In the copy of this book, printed at Paris, 1508, by Robert and John Gourmont, these virulent libels are called '*Divinum Francisci Philelpi Poetæ Christiani Satyrarum Opus*.' As their motto the publishers give these sentences:—'*Finis laus Deo, Spes mea Jesus*.' For the abuse of the Medicean circle see Dec. i. Hec. 5; Dec. i. Hec. 6; Dec. ii. Hec. 1, 3, 7; Dec. iii. Hec. 10; Dec. vi. 10; Dec. viii. 5. For Filelfo's attack on Cosimo during his imprisonment, see Dec. iv. Hec. 1. For his invective against Cosimo on his return from exile, see Dec. iv. Hec. 9. For an appeal to Filippo Maria Visconti against Cosimo, see Dec. v. Hec. 1. For a similar appeal to Eugenius IV., see Dec. v. Hec. 2. For the episode of the assassin Filippo, see Dec. v. Hec. 6. A political attack on Cosimo addressed to Rinaldo Albizzi is contained in Dec. v. Hec. 8. A furious denunciation of Cosimo's tyranny, in Dec. v. Hec. 9. Palla degli Strozzi, as an opponent of Cosimo, is praised in Dec. iii. 1; Dec. vi. 4. In Dec. vii. 8, Filelfo promises to moderate his fury. In addition to these sources see the MS. invectives mentioned in Rosmini, vol. i. p. 47.

began to shower upon him. The Council of Basle, the Venetian Senate, the Emperor of the East, Eugenius IV., the Universities of Perugia and Bologna, and the Duke of Milan applied for his services. It was not, however, until the year 1439 that his love of change, combined with the allurements of higher pay, induced him to close with the offers of the Senate of Bologna. Once more, then, he crossed the Apennines, and once more, after a brief sojourn of a few months, he again quitted Bologna, and transferred himself to Milan. His reception by Filippo Maria Visconti was most flattering. Placing a diamond ring upon his finger, the Duke welcomed him among the nobles of his Court on New Year's Day in 1440. Thus began Filelfo's connection with the Lombard capital, which, though often interrupted, was never wholly broken till his death.

The munificence of the Visconti exceeded that of any of Filelfo's patrons,<sup>81</sup> while the mode of life at Milan exactly suited his vain-glorious temperament. He loved to throw his money about among lords, to appear at high Court festivals, and to take the lead on ceremonial occasions in his rank of orator. There was, moreover, no rival strong enough to threaten the blasting of his popularity.<sup>82</sup> We find him, during his residence at Milan, continually engaged in the exercise of rhetoric. Public and private incidents of the most various character employed his skill, nor is there any doubt that his large professorial income was considerably increased by presents received from patrons and employers.<sup>83</sup> In addition to the labours of his chair, he engaged in various literary works. His Satires and Odes were gradually growing into ponderous volumes.<sup>84</sup> Other fugitive pieces in prose he put to-

<sup>81</sup> His professorial stipend was soon raised from 500 to 700 golden florins.

<sup>82</sup> Vespasiano says that the concourse of people to Carlo Aretino's lectures was the first cause of Filelfo's feuds at Florence.

<sup>83</sup> Here are the dates of some of these displays:—

1440. Funeral oration on Stefano Federigo Todeschini.

1441. Epithalamial on the Marriage of Giovanni Marliani.

1442. Discourse on Duties of a Magistrate.

1446. Panegyric of Filippo Maria Visconti, and oration on the Election of Jacopo Borromeo to the See of Pavia.

1450. Oration of Welcome to Francesco Sforza.

1455. Epithalamial on the Marriage of Tristano Sforza to Beatrice d'Este.

1458. Epithalamials for Antonio Crivelli and Teodoro Piatti.

1459. Oration to Pius II. on his Crusade.

1460. Oration on the Election of the Bishop of Como.

1464. Funeral oration for the Senator Filippo Borromeo.

1466. Ditto for Francesco Sforza.

It is probable that all of these were not recited; but all were conceived in the lumbering and pedantic style that passed for eloquence at that period. With regard to rewards received on these occasions, note the gift of a silver basin from Jacopo Antonio Marcello in return for a consolatory epistle. Romini, vol. ii. p. 127. Cf. p. 107.

<sup>84</sup> The Satires, collected into ten decades, each satire consisting of 100 lines, were dedicated to Alfonso of Naples in 1451. Printed at Milan, 1446. The Odes, entitled *De Seruis et Iocis*, were finished in 1465, and dedicated partly to Malatesta Novello of Cesena, partly to Alessandro Sforza. There were ten books, each book containing 1,000 lines. Never printed. Rosmini, who inspected the MSS., reports that their obscurity



gether under the title of *Convivia Mediolanensia*.' Meanwhile he carried on an active correspondence, both familiar and hortatory, with the scholars and the princes of his day.<sup>85</sup> There was no branch of letters with which, sustained by sublime self-approval, he was not willing and eager to meddle. As he had professed Dante at Florence, so here at Milan, by ducal command, he undertook to comment upon Petrarch, and actually composed a poem on S. John the Baptist in *terza rima*. There is something ludicrous in the thought of this Visconti, would-be Herod as in truth he was, commissioning Filelfo, the outrageous Pagan, to versify the life of Christ's forerunner. If Filelfo despised anything more than sacred history, it was the Italian language; and if there was a task for which he was unfitted, it was the composition of poetry.

During the second year of his Milanese residence Filelfo lost his wife Theodora. He speedily married again, choosing for his bride a beautiful young lady of good family in Milan. Her name was Orsina Osnaga. Since I have touched upon this matter of Filelfo's private life, it may be well to add that when he lost his second wife, he took in wedlock for the third time Laura Magiolini. By each of his marriages he acquired no inconsiderable property, and all his brides belonged to highly distinguished families. The best thing that can be said about Filelfo as a man is, that he was undoubtedly attached to his wives and to the numerous children they bore him.<sup>86</sup> This feeling did not, however, protect him from numerous infidelities, or save his fortune from the burden of illegitimate children.<sup>87</sup> It is even doubtful whether credence should not be accorded to suggestions of worse debauchery, repeated with every appearance of belief by his enemies, and on his side but imperfectly refuted. Filelfo was, in truth, a man of great physical vigour, whose energies the mere labour of the student was insufficient to exhaust. Loves and hatreds, domestic sympathies and turbulent passions, absorbed a portion of his superfluous force; nor was he at any time restrained by scruples of religion or morality. What was good for Greeks and Roman was good for him. It is also to be noted that the innate sense of delicacy which sometimes forms the safeguard of excessive temperaments was altogether alien to his nature.

During the disasters that befell the State of Milan on the death of Filippo Maria, Filelfo at first espoused the cause of the burghers. A letter to the Florentines is extant, in which he exhorts them to aid their sister commonwealth at the extreme hour of her peril. It was not nat-

exceeds description, and is only equalled by the vulgarity of the author's fancy and the coarseness of his style. In addition to these unpublished Latin poems, Filelfo collected three books of Greek elegies and epigrams, amounting to 2,400 verses. It is significant that he measured his poetry by lines, and trained his jog-trot muse to paces of 100 verses.

<sup>85</sup> The Epistle to Ladislaus of Hungary on his victories over the Turks, for instance.

<sup>86</sup> He had twelve sons and twelve daughters. They did not all live.

<sup>87</sup> A curious sign of current feeling is that Filelfo frequently boasted of being *πρώτογνης*. See Rosmini, i. p. 15, and the verse quoted, *ib.* p. 113. He mentioned two natural children in his will and had many more. Rosmini, vol. iii. p. 78.

ural, however, that a humanist, who had no zeal for freedom, and whose personal interests led him to desire a settled government at any price, should continue staunch to a republic so unnerved as that of Milan. When Carlo Gonzaga played the Milanese false by admitting the troops of Francesco Sforza, Filelfo was the first to welcome the new monarch with a set oration. He professed great admiration for the general who, by careful management and double-dealing, had placed himself at the head of the third state in the peninsula. Yet his correspondence at this period proves that his mind was uneasy, and that he desired a change. In an impudent letter addressed to Nicholas V., he solicited ecclesiastical preferment, suggesting that the promise of a bishop's mitre would secure his splendid talents for the service of the Papacy.<sup>88</sup> However desirous the Pope might be to engage Filelfo for his translation factory at Rome, the price demanded was too great. He could not recognise a vocation so clearly inspired by mercenary motives; and to receive into the high places of the Church, at his own request, a man accused of many vices, who had twice been married, would have established a dangerous precedent. Filelfo, receiving neither substantial encouragement nor a flat refusal, turned his thoughts to matrimony for the third time, and addressed a prayer on this occasion to Dame Venus, in which he besought the mother of Priapus to befriend her votary. The intelligent student of the Renaissance will not fail to notice the state of mind implied by the juxtaposition of this letter to the Holy Father and this ode to Venus.

Filelfo was now fain to content himself with the patronage of Francesco Sforza, a prince who had no natural turn for literature, but who was wise enough to know that a *parvenu* could least of all afford to neglect the ruling fashions of his age. The letters he wrote at this period abound in impudent demands for money, querulous outcries over the poverty to which the first scholar of the century was condemned, and violent menaces of retaliation if his salary remained in arrears.<sup>89</sup> Not only Francesco Sforza, but all the patrons upon whom Filelfo thought

<sup>88</sup> Rosmini, vol. ii. p. 54. It may be remembered that Pietro Aretino hinted he should like to be a cardinal.

<sup>89</sup> As a specimen of Filelfo's Grub Street style of begging, I transcribe the following elegy (Rosmini, vol. ii. p. 285):—

Hæc autem altisone dum carmina celsius effert  
Defecisse suo sentit ab ore tubam,  
Nam quia magnifici data non est copia nummi  
Cogitur huic uti carmini raucidulo.  
Quod neque mireris; vocem pretiosa canoram  
Esca dat, et potus excitat ingenium.  
Ingenium spurco suevit languescere vino,  
Humida mugitum reddere rapa solet.'

Francesco Sforza's anxiety to retain Filelfo in his service is expressed in a letter to his treasurer (*ib.* p. 295):—'Noi per niuno modo el vogliamo perdere, la qual cosa seguirebbe quando gli paresse essere deluso, e non potesse seguitare per manchamento delli dicti 250 fiorini la nobilissima opera per lui in nostra gloria comenzata nè suplire agli altri suoi bisogni.' The *tuba* and the *nobilissima opera* both refer to Filelfo's Sforziad.

he had a claim, were assailed with reptile lamentations and more reptile menaces. Alessandro Sforza, Lodovico Gonzaga, and three Popes in succession may be mentioned among the more distinguished princes who suffered from this literary brigandage.<sup>90</sup> Not without strict justice did a contemporary describe him in the following severe terms:—'He is calumnious, envious, vain, and so greedy of gold that he metes out praise or blame according to the gifts he gets, both despicable as proceeding from a tainted source.'<sup>91</sup> Filelfo's rapacity is truly disgusting when we remember that he received far more than any equally distinguished student of his age. Not the illiberality of patrons, but his own luxurious habits, reduced him to beggary. All the while that he was screaming in bad Latin verse, he lived expensively, indulging ostentatious tastes, and finding money for unclean indulgences. In order to confirm his claim on the Duke of Milan's generosity, he began a gigantic Latin epic upon the life of Sforza. Without plan, a mere versified chronicle, encumbered with foolish mythological machinery, and loaded with fulsome flatteries, this leaden Sforziad crawled on until 12,800 lines had been written. Only the first eight books of it were published in MS., nor were these ever printed.<sup>92</sup>

By fair means and by foul, Filelfo had managed to secure a splendid reputation throughout Italy. His journey to Naples in 1453 resembled a triumphal progress. Nicholas V. entertained him with distinction, read his infamous satires, presented him with a purse of 500 ducats, and offered him a yearly stipend of 600 if he would dedicate his talents to translation. Alfonso dubbed him knight, and placed the poet's laurel on his brow with his own royal hands. As he passed through their capitals, the princes received him like an equal. At Ferrara he enjoyed the hospitalities of Duke Borso, at Mantua the friendship of the Marchese Lodovico Gonzaga; the terrible Gismondo Pandolfo Malatesta welcomed him in Rimini, and the General Jacopo Piccinino in his camp at Fossombrone. Nor was this fame confined to Italy. On the fall of Constantinople he addressed a letter to the Sultan, beseeching him to release his mother-in-law and her two daughters from captivity; the humanist's eloquence obtained this favour from the Turkish conqueror, who refused to accept a ransom for the relatives of so illustrious an orator.<sup>93</sup>

<sup>90</sup> I may call particular attention to Filelfo's behaviour with regard to Pius II.—the free pension of 200 florins granted (Rosmini, vol. ii. p. 106), the menaces because it is not paid (*ib.* p. 115), the scurrilous epigrams on the Pope's death (*ib.* p. 321), the abusive letter addressed to Paul II. (*ib.* p. 136), the sentence of imprisonment for calumny issued against him and his son Mario (*ib.* p. 140), the final palinode in which he basely praises the Pope whom he had basely abused (*ib.* p. 146). The whole series of transactions is disgraceful.

<sup>91</sup> Letter of Gregorio Lollio to the Cardinal of Pavia, reported by Rosmini (vol. ii. p. 147).

<sup>92</sup> The whole poem ran to sixteen books. Therefore, according to Filelfo's art of poetry, the first eight contained 6,400 verses.

<sup>93</sup> See Rosmini, vol. ii. p. 90. The Greek epistle which he sent is printed, *ib.* p. 305.

Until the death of Francesco Sforza Milan continued to be the city of Filelfo's choice. After that event he turned his thoughts to Rome. Pius II., Paul II., and Sixtus IV., in succession, had testified their regard for him, either by moderate presents, sufficient to excite his cupidity and check his slanderous temper, or by negotiations which came to nothing. At last, in 1474, he received from Rome the offer of a professorial chair, with a stipend of 600 florins, and the promise of the first vacant post in the Apostolic Chancery.

The old man of seventy-seven years once more journeyed across the plains of Lombardy, ascended the Apennines, passed through Florence,<sup>94</sup> and began his lectures with the 'Tusculans' of Cicero, on the twelfth day of January, 1475, in Rome. The marks of favour with which Sixtus had received him were highly honourable. Filelfo was permitted to sit in the Pope's presence, and on Christmas Day he stood among the ambassadors while Sixtus celebrated mass. The vigorous old scholar at first felt that all his previous life had been a tedious prologue to this blissful play. Soon, however, a cloud arose on the horizon. The Pope's treasurer, Milliardo Cicala, was remiss in payments. Filelfo retaliated by describing Cicala's vices in the most lurid colours to Sixtus.<sup>95</sup> Though his style and eloquence were always vulgar, the concentrated fury and impassioned hatred of these invectives cannot fail to impress the imagination. Such a picture of the dissolute and grasping treasurer, painted by Filelfo and sent to Sixtus, has a sinister humour which might recommend itself to the audience of an infernal comedy. It is only necessary to have some knowledge of the three men in order to perceive its force. Nor did Sixtus himself long continue in Filelfo's graces. Frequent journeys prove how unsettled he became; at last he left Rome in 1476, never to return. When the Pazzi Conjururation failed at Florence, Filelfo wrote to congratulate Lorenzo de' Medici on his escape, and undertook the task of composing a history of the whole intrigue. Two long and violent letters addressed to Sixtus, accusing him of participation in the conspiracy, and heaping on him charges of vice, were the result of this determination.<sup>96</sup> These epistles were dated from Milan, whither Filelfo had retired in 1476, to find his third wife dead of the plague and buried on the eve of his arrival. His sorrow on this occasion was genuine; nor is it likely that he derived much comfort from a curious epistle addressed to him by Paolo Morosini, who, himself a husband and father, attempted to console the septuagenarian professor by elaborate abuse of matrimony.<sup>97</sup> To such ridiculous vagaries did the rhetorical spirit of humanism lead its votaries.

Filelfo's last journey was undertaken in 1481. Ill at ease, and sore of heart, the veteran of scholarship still longed for further triumphs. All his wishes for some time past had been set on ending his days at

<sup>94</sup> He had long since made peace with the Medici.

<sup>95</sup> See the original letters in Rosmini, vol. ii. pp. 411-419.

<sup>96</sup> Rosmini, vol. ii. p. 261, note.

<sup>97</sup> *Ib.* p. 248.

Florence, near the person of Lorenzo de' Medici; and when an invitation to the Chair of Greek Literature arrived, it found him eager to set forth. He was so poor, however, that the Duke's secretary, Jacopo Antiquari, had to lend him money for the journey.<sup>98</sup> He just managed to reach Florence, where he died of dysentery a fortnight after his arrival, at the age of eighty-three. The Florentines buried him in the Church of the Annunziata.

The sketch which I have given of Filelfo's life, abounds in details beyond the just proportions of the present chapter. This is due partly to the copiousness and the excellence of the authorities collected by Rosmini in his exhaustive biography, but more to the undoubted fact that Filelfo ranks as the typical humanist of his age. The universality of his acquirements and the impression they made upon contemporaries, his enormous physical vigour and incessant mental activity, the vehemence with which he prosecuted his literary warfares and the restlessness that drove him from capital to capital in Italy, are themselves enough to mark him out as the representative hero of the second period of humanism. Not less characteristic were the quality and the form of his literary work—ridiculously over-valued then, and now perhaps too readily depreciated. There is something pathetic in the certainty of everlasting fame that sustained the student through so many years of unremitting labour. It makes us wonder whether the achievement of the human intellect, in science and discovery, acceptable as these may be to their own time, are not, equally with Filelfo's triumph of scholarship, foredoomed to speedy obscurity. Nothing is imperishable but high thought, to which art has communicated the indestructible form of beauty.

The 'Age of the Despots'<sup>99</sup> contains a promise of further details concerning Vittorino da Feltre, to redeem which the time has now come. His father's name was Bruto de' Rambaldoni; but having been born at Feltre in the year 1378, he took from his birthplace the surname by which he is best known.

Like the majority of his contemporaries, Vittorino studied Latin under John of Ravenna and rhetoric under Gasparino da Barizza. His poverty compelled him at the same time to support himself by taking pupils; this drudgery, however, was so unremunerative that, when he wanted to attend the mathematical lectures of Biagio Pelacane, he had to pay that avaricious and eccentric teacher by personal service. As Haydn

<sup>98</sup> I cannot allow this mention of Antiquari's name to pass without a note upon his life and services to letters. He was born and educated at Perugia, entered the service of the Papal Legate Battista Savelli as secretary at Bologna, and afterwards received the post of secretary and diplomatic writer to the Sforza family at Milan. The Duke Galeazzo Maria was his first master. At Milan he played the part of an amiable and refined Mæcenas, while he carried on a correspondence in Latin—still delightful to read—with Poliziano and all the greatest scholars of his age. His biography, written at some length, with valuable miscellaneous appendices by Vermiglioli, was published at Perugia in 1819.

<sup>99</sup> Pp. 89, 90.

got his much-desired instruction from Porpora by playing the part of valet,<sup>100</sup> so Vittorino became the scullery boy of Palacane,<sup>101</sup> in order that he might acquire geometry. These early studies were carried on at Padua, from which town he appears to have moved about the year 1417 to Venice. Here he entered into friendship with Guarino da Verona, and having learned Greek, returned to his old university as professor of rhetoric.<sup>102</sup> The bias of Vittorino's genius inclined toward private teaching, and it is this by which he is distinguished among contemporary humanists. Accordingly we find that, as soon as he was settled in Padua, he opened a school for a fixed number of young men, selected without regard to rank or wealth. From the richer pupils he required fees proportioned to their means; from the poor he exacted nothing: thus the wealthy were made to support the needy, while the teacher obtained for himself the noble satisfaction of relieving aspirants after knowledge from the pressure of want and privation. Other gain than this he never thought of. Only genuine students were allowed to remain in Vittorino's school; the moral rule was strict, and high thinking and plain living were expected from all his pupils. This generous devotion to the cause of learning for its own sake contrasts strongly with the self-seeking and vainglory of other humanists. When Filelfo was urged on one occasion to open a school for promising young men of noble birth, he asked disdainfully whether his friends expected him to take rank as a licensed victualler.<sup>103</sup> He was unable to comprehend the possibility of doing anything that would not reflect lustre on himself or place him in the light of popular applause.

Vittorino found it difficult to govern his school at Padua as strictly as he wished. The public Gymnasium was ill-ordered, and great license of life was permitted to its students. He therefore removed to Venice in 1423, where he continued his work as private tutor. By this time, however, he had acquired considerable reputation as an educator, to whose care the youth of both sexes might be entrusted with implicit confidence—no small testimony to his goodness in that age of ungoverned passions and indescribable vices. The Marchese Gian Francesco Gonzaga was looking out for a master for his children, and his choice fell on Vittorino. The admiration of antiquity was no mere matter of fashion with this prince. He loved history for its own sake, and professed a special reverence for the Roman Camillus. His practical good sense made him understand that, if he wished his sons and daughters to become thoroughly educated, not only in the humanities and mathematics, but also in the republican virtues of the ancients, which then formed the ideal of life in Italy, he must be willing to commit them wholly to the charge of their appointed governor. Vittorino, who would

<sup>100</sup> Grove's *Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, vol. i. p. 704 b.

<sup>101</sup> 'Usque ad mundandam suppellectilem quæ sumpto cibo lavare consuerit.'—Rosmini, *Vita di Vittorino*, p. 38, note.

<sup>102</sup> In 1422 apparently.

<sup>103</sup> *Locandiere*. Rosmini, vol. i. p. 67.

have undertaken the duty on no other condition, obtained full control of the young princes and their servants. An appointment of twenty sequins per month was assigned to him, together with a general order on the treasury of Mantua. A villa, called Casa Zojosa, which we may translate Joyous Gard, was allotted to the new household, and there Vittorino established himself as master in 1425. He had much to do before this dwelling could be converted from the pleasure house of a mediæval sovereign into the semi-monastic resort of earnest students. Through its open galleries and painted banquet chambers the young Gonzaghi lounged with favourite friends selected from the Mantuan nobility. The tables groaned under gold and silver plate, while perfumed lacqueys handed round rich wines and highly seasoned dishes, and the garden alleys echoed to the sound of lute and viol. Without making any brusque or sudden reformation, Vittorino managed, by degrees, and on various pretexts, to dismiss the more dangerous friends and servants of his pupils. A strict house-porter was engaged, with orders to exclude suspicious visitors. Plain clothes, simple habits, and frugal meals became the rule of the household, Vittorino contriving to render these changes no less agreeable than salutary to his pupils. When complaints arose from the former companions of the princes and their parents, he laid his plain of training clearly before the Marquis, who had the good sense to approve of all that he had done.

The eldest of Gian Francesco's children, Lodovico, was a youth of lazy habits, inclined to gluttony, and already too fat for his age. The next, Carlo, had outgrown his strength, and needed more substantial food. Vittorino devised systems of diet and physical training suited to their several temperaments, making it his one object to increase their vigours, and by multiplying sources of rational enjoyment to dispose them to the energetic exercise of their faculties. He by no means neglected what we call athletics. Indeed, it was a fundamental axiom of his method that a robust body could alone harbour a healthy mind. Boys who sat poring over books, or haunted solitary places, lost in dreaming, found no favour in his eyes. To exercises in the gymnasium or the riding-school he preferred games in the open air; hunting and fishing, wrestling and fencing, running and jumping, were practised by his pupils in the park outside their palace. To harden them against severities of heat and cold, to render them temperate in food and drink, to train their voices, and to improve their carriage was his first care. Since he could not himself superintend their education in all its branches, he engaged a subordinate staff of tutors; grammarians, logicians, mathematicians, painters, and masters of riding, dancing, singing, swimming, fencing, began to crowd the halls of Joyous Gard. Each had his own allotted task to perform while Vittorino surveyed the whole scheme. 'Perhaps' says Rosmini,<sup>104</sup> 'the only sciences that were not taught in this academy were civil and canon law and natural physics.'



It must not be imagined that so extensive an apparatus existed solely for the youths of the young Gonzaghi. Noble youths from all the Courts of Italy, and students from remote parts of Europe, sought admittance to Vittorino's school. The more promising of these pupils, who fitted by their rank and disposition to associate with his princely charges, the master housed under his own roof; while for the rest he provided suitable lodgings near at hand. Many were the poor students who thus owed to his generosity participation in the most refined and scientific culture their century afforded.<sup>105</sup> While paying this tribute to Vittorino da Feltre, we must remember the honour that is also due to Gian Francesco Gonzaga. Had this prince not been endowed with true liberality of soul and freedom from petty prejudice, Vittorino could never have developed a system based upon pure democratic principles, which even now may rank as an unrivalled educational ideal. If the master, again, was able to provide for sixty poor scholars at a time—teaching, feeding, clothing, and furnishing them with costly books, his friend the Marquis must, we feel sure, have supplied his purse with extra funds for charitable purposes.<sup>106</sup>

The numerous biographers of Vittorino have transmitted many details in illustration of his method of teaching. He used to read the classic authors aloud, prefixing biographical notices by way of introduction, and explaining the matter, as well as the language of his text, as he proceeded. Sometimes he made his pupils read, correcting their pronunciation, and obliging them to mark the meaning by emphasis. He relied much on learning by heart and repetition, as the surest means of forming a good style. Gifted with a finer instinct for language than the majority of his contemporaries, he was careful that his pupils should distinguish between different types of literary excellence, not confounding Cicero with Seneca or Virgil with Lucan, but striving to appreciate the special qualities of each. With a view to the acquisition of pure principles of taste, he confined them at first to Virgil and Homer, Cicero and Demosthenes. These four authors he regarded as the supreme masters of expression. Ovid was too luxuriant, Juvenal too coarse, to serve as guides for tyros. Horace and Persius among the satirists, Terence among the comic poets, might be safely studied. In spite of Seneca's weight as a philosophic essayist, Vittorino censured the affectations of his rhetoric; and while he praised the beauty of the Latin elegists, he judged them ill-suited for the training of the young. Criticism of this kind, though it may sound to us obvious and superficial, was extremely rare in the fifteenth century, when scholars were too apt to neglect differences of style in ancient authors, and to ignore the ethics of their works. The refinement which distinguished Vittorino,

<sup>105</sup> Sixty poor scholars were taught, fed, clothed, and provided with implements of study at his cost. He also subsidised their families in distress. Rosmini, *Vita di Vittorino*, pp. 165, 166.

<sup>106</sup> Rosmini, *Vita di Vittorino*, p. 165. Vespasiano, p. 492, tells a story which illustrates these relations between Vittorino and the Marquis. Cf., too, p. 494.

made him prefer the graces of a chastened manner to the sounding phrases of emphatic declamation. His pupils were taught to see that they had something to say first, and then to say it with simplicity and elegance.

This purity of taste was no mere matter of æsthetic sensibility with Vittorino. Habits which brutalise the mind or debase the body, however sanctioned by the usage of the times, met with little toleration in his presence. Swearing, obscene language, vulgar joking, and angry altercation were severely punished. Personal morality and the observance of religious exercises he exacted from his pupils. Lying was a heinous offence. Those who proved intractable upon these points were excluded from his school. Of the rest Vespasiano writes with emphasis that 'his house was a sanctuary of manners, deeds, and words.'<sup>107</sup>

Concerning the noble Italian youths who were educated with the Gonzaga family at Mantua, enough has been said in another place.<sup>108</sup> Appended to Rosmini's copious biography will be found, by those who are curious to read such details, the notices of forty more or less distinguished pupils.<sup>109</sup> Besides the two sons of Gian Francesco Gonzaga already mentioned, Vittorino educated three other children of his master—Gianlucido, Alessandro, and Cecilia.<sup>110</sup> Wholly dedicated to the cares of teaching, and more anxious to survive in the good fame of his scholars than to secure the immortality of literature, Vittorino bequeathed no writings to posterity. He lived to a hale and hearty old age; and when he died, in 1446, it was found that the illustrious scholar, after enjoying for so many years the liberality of his princely patron, had not accumulated enough money to pay for his own funeral. Whatever he possessed, he spent in charity during his lifetime, trusting to the kindness of his friends to bury him when dead. Few lives of which there is any record in history, are so perfectly praiseworthy as Vittorino's; few men have more nobly realised the idea of living for the highest objects of their age; few have succeeded in keeping themselves so wholly unspotted by the vices of the world around them.

By the patronage extended to Vittorino da Feltre the Court of Mantua took rank among the high schools of humanism in Italy. Ferrara won a similar distinction through the liberality of the House of Este. What has already been said about Milan applies, however, in a less degree to Ferrara. The arts and letters though they flourished with exceeding brilliance beneath the patrons of Boiardo, Ariosto, and Tasso, were but accessories to a splendid and voluptuous Court life. Literature was little better than an exotic, cultivated for its rarity and beauty by the princes of the Este family.

The golden age of culture at Ferrara began in 1402, when Niccolo

<sup>107</sup> P. 492.

<sup>108</sup> Vol. I., *Age of the Despots*, p. 89.

<sup>109</sup> Pp. 249-476.

<sup>110</sup> See Rosmini, p. 183, and Vespasiano, p. 493, for the record of her virtues, her learning, and her refusal to wed the infamous Oddo da Montefeltro.

III. reopened the university. Twenty-seven years later Guarino da Verona made it one of the five chief seats of Southern learning. The life of this eminent scholar in many points resembles that of Filelfo, though their characters were very different. Guarino was born of respectable parents at Verona in 1370. He studied Latin in the school of Giovanni da Ravenna, and while still a lad of eighteen travelled to Constantinople at the cost of a noble Venetian, Paolo Zane, in order to learn Greek. After a residence of five years in Greece he returned to Venice, and began to lecture to crowded audiences.<sup>111</sup> Like all the humanists, he seems to have preferred temporary to permanent engagements—passing from Venice to Verona, from Trent to Padua, from Bologna to Florence, and everywhere acquiring that substantial reputation as a teacher to which he owed the invitation of Niccolo d'Este in 1429. He was now a man of nearly sixty, master of the two languages, and well acquainted with the method of instruction. The Marquis of Ferrara engaged him as tutor to his illegitimate son Lionello, heir apparent to his throne. For seven years Guarino devoted himself wholly to the education of this youth, who passed for one of the best scholars of his age. Granting that the reputation for learning was lightly conferred on princes by their literary parasites, it seems certain that Lionello derived more than a mere smattering in culture from his tutor. Amid the pleasures of the chase to which he was passionately devoted, and the distractions of the gayest Court in Italy, he found time to correspond on topics of scholarship with Poggio, Filelfo, Decembrio, and Francesco Barbaro. His conversation turned habitually upon the fashionable themes of antique ethics, and his favourite companions were men of polite education. It is no wonder that the humanists, who saw in him a future Augustus, deplored his early death with unfeigned sorrow, though we, who can only judge him by the general standard of his family, may be permitted to reserve our opinion. The profile portrait of Lionello, now preserved in the National Gallery, does not, at any rate, prepossess us very strongly in his favour.

Guarino, like his friend Vittorino, was celebrated for the method of his teaching and for the exact order of his discipline.<sup>112</sup> Students flocked from all the cities of Italy to his lecture-room; for, as soon as his tutorial engagements with the prince permitted, he received a public appointment as professor of eloquence from the Ferrarese Consiglio de' Savi. In this post he laboured for many years, maintaining his reputation as a student and filling the universities of Italy with his pupils. A sentence describing his manner of life in extreme old age might be used to illustrate the enthusiasm which sustained the vital energy of scholars in that generation:—"His memory is marvellous, and his habit of reading is so indefatigable, that he scarcely takes the time to eat, to sleep, or to go abroad; and yet his limbs and senses have the vigour of

<sup>111</sup> See his *Life* by Rosmini, p. 11, for his brilliant reception at Venice.

<sup>112</sup> See the details collected by Rosmini, *Vita di Guarino*, pp. 79-87.

youth.<sup>113</sup> Guarino was one of the few humanists whose moral character won equal respect with his learning. When he died at the age of ninety, the father of six boys and seven girls by his wife Taddea Cendrata of Verona, it was possible to say with truth that he had realised the ideal of a temperate scholar's life. Yet this incomparable teacher of youth undertook the defence of Beccadelli's obscene verses: this anchorite of humanism penned virulent invectives with the worst of his contemporaries.<sup>114</sup> Such contrasts were common enough in the fifteenth century.

The name of Giovanni Aurispa must not be omitted in connection with Ferrara. Born in 1369 at Noto in Sicily, he lived to a great age, and died in 1459. He too travelled in early youth to Constantinople, and returned laden with MSS. and learning, to profess the humanities in Italy. His life forms, therefore, a close parallel with that of both Guarino and Filelfo. Aurispa, however, was gifted with a less unresting temper than Filelfo; nor did he achieve the same professorial success as Guarino. In his school at Ferrara he enjoyed the calmer pleasures of a student's life, 'devoted,' as Filelfo phrased it, 'to the placid Muses.'<sup>115</sup>

To give an account of all the minor Courts, where humanism flourished under the patronage of petty princes would be tedious and unprofitable. It is enough to notice that the universities, in this age of indefatigable energy, kept forming scholars, eager to make their way as secretaries and tutors, while the nobles competed for the honour and the profit to be derived from the service of illustrious wits and ready pens. The seeds of classic culture were thus sown in every little city that could boast its castle. Carpi, for example, was preparing the ground where Aldus and Musurus flourished. At Forlì the Ordelaffi, doomed to extinction at no distant period, gave protection to Codrus Urceus.<sup>116</sup> Mirandola was growing fit to be the birthplace of the mighty Pico. Alessandro and Costanzo Sforza were adorning their lordship of Pesaro with a library that rivalled those of Rome and Florence.<sup>117</sup> In the fortress of Rimini, Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta conversed with men of learning whenever his intrigues and his military duties gave him leisure. The desperate and godless tyrant, whose passions bordered upon madness, and whose name was a byword for all the vices that disgrace humanity, curbed his temper before petty wittings like Porcellio, and carved a record of his burning love for learning on the temple raised to celebrate his fame in Rimini.' To the same passion for scholarship in his brother, Malatesta Novello, the tiny burgh of

<sup>113</sup> Timoteo Maffei, quoted by Tiraboschi, vol. vi. lib. iii. cap. 5, 8.

<sup>114</sup> He carried on literary feuds with Niccolò de' Niccoli, Poggio, Filelfo, and Georgios Trapezuntios.

<sup>115</sup> 'Placidis Aurispa Camoenis Deditus,' *Sat.*, dec. i. hec. 5. Valla, *Antid. in Pogium*, p. 7, describes him as 'virum suavissimum et ab omni contentione remotissimum.'

<sup>116</sup> Cf. Tiraboschi, vi. lib. iii. cap. 5, 58.

<sup>117</sup> Vespasiano, pp. 113-117, gives an interesting account of these lettered and warlike princes.

Cesena owed the foundation of a library, not only well supplied with books, but endowed with a yearly income of 300 golden florins for its maintenance. The money spent on scholarship at these minor Courts was gained for the most part, in military service—the wealth of Florentine and Venetian citizens, of Milanese despots, and ambitious Popes flowing through the hands of professional war-captains into the pockets of booksellers and students. It consequently happened that the impulse given at this time to learning in the lesser cities was but temporary. With the fall of the Malatesti and the Sforza family, for instance, erudition died at Rimini and Pesaro.

This might have been the case at Urbino also, if the House of Montefeltro had not succeeded, by wise conduct and prudent marriages, in resisting the encroachments of the Church, and transmitting its duchy to the Della Rovere family. As it was, Urbino retained for three generations the stamp of culture and refinement impressed upon it by the good Duke Frederick. Of his famous library, Vespasiano, who was employed in its formation, has given us minute and interesting details.<sup>118</sup> During more than fourteen years the Duke kept thirty or forty copyists continually employed in transcribing Greek and Latin MSS. Not only the classics in both languages, but the ecclesiastical and mediæval authors, the Italian poets, and the works of contemporary humanists found a place in his collection. The cost of the whole was estimated a considerably over 30,000 ducats. Each volume was bound in crimson, with silver clasps; the leaves were of vellum, exquisitely adorned with miniatures; nor could you find a printed book in the whole library, for the Duke would have been ashamed to own one. Vespasiano's admiration for these delicately finished MSS. and the contempt he expresses for the new art of printing are highly characteristic.<sup>119</sup> Enough has been already said by me elsewhere about Federigo da Montefeltro and his patronage of learning.<sup>120</sup> The Queen's collection at Windsor contains a curious picture, attributed to Melozza da Forlì, of which I may be allowed to speak in this place, since it possesses more than usual interest for the student of humanism at the Italian Courts. In a large rectangular hall, lighted from above by windows in a dome, the Duke of Urbino is seated, wearing the robes and badges of the Garter, and resting his left hand on a folio. His son Guidobaldo, a boy of about eleven years of age, or little more, stands at the Duke's knee, dressed in yellow damask trimmed with pearls. Behind them, on a raised bench with a desk before it, sit three men, one attired in the red suit of a prelate, the second in black ecclesiastical attire, and the third in secular costume. At a door, opening on a passage, stand servants and lesser courtiers. The whole company are listening attentively to a grey-haired, black-robed humanist, seated in a sort of pulpit opposite

<sup>118</sup> See pp. 88-92.

<sup>119</sup> P. 99.

<sup>120</sup> Vol. I., *Age of the Despots*, pp. 89-92.

to the Duke and his son. A large book, bound in crimson with silver clasps is open on the desk before him; and by the movement of his mouth it is clear that he is reading aloud passages from some classical or ecclesiastical author, and explaining them for the benefit of his illustrious audience. To identify the scholar and the three men behind Federigo would not be impossible, if the exact date of this curious work could be ascertained; for they are clearly portraits. I like to fancy that in the layman we may perhaps recognise the excellent Vespasiano. Such conjectures are, however, hazardous; meanwhile the picture has intrinsic value as the unique representation, so far as I know, of a scene of frequent occurrence in the Courts of Italy, where listening to lectures formed a part of every day's occupation.

This is the proper place to speak of Vespasiano da Bisticci, on whose 'Lives of Illustrious Men' I have had occasion to draw so copiously. Peculiar interest attaches to him as the last of mediæval scribes, and at the same time the first of modern booksellers.<sup>121</sup> Besides being the agent of Cosimo de' Medici, Nicholas V., and Frederick Urbino, Vespasiano supplied the foreign markets, sending MSS. by order to Hungary, Portugal, Germany, and England. The extent of his trade rendered him the largest employer of copyists in Europe at the moment when this industry was about to be superseded, and when scholars were already inquiring for news about the art that saved expense and shortened the labour of the student.<sup>122</sup> Vespasiano, who was born in 1421 at Florence, lived until 1498; so that after having helped to form the three greatest collections of MSS. in Italy, he witnessed the triumph of printing, and might have even handled the Musæus issued from the Aldine Press in 1493. Vespasiano was no mere tradesman. His knowledge of the books he sold was accurate; continual study enabled him to overlook the copyists, and to vouch for the exactitude of their transcripts.<sup>123</sup> At the same time his occupation brought him into close intimacy with the chief scholars of the age, so that the new culture reached him by conversation and familiar correspondence. As a biographer Vespasiano possessed rare merit. Personally acquainted with the men of whom he wrote, he drew their characters with praiseworthy succinctness and simplicity. There is no panegyric emphasis, no calumnious innuendo, in his sketches. It may even be said that they suffer from reservation of opinion and suppression of facts. Vespasiano's hatred of

<sup>121</sup> In the register of his death he is described as Vespasiano, Cartolaro.

<sup>122</sup> See Rosmini, *Vita di Filelfo*, vol. ii. p. 201. 'I have made up my mind to buy some of those codices they are now making without any trouble, and without the pen, but with certain so-called types, and which seem to be the work of a skilled and exact scribe. Tell me, then, at what price are sold the *Natural History* of Pliny, the three Decades of Livy, and Aulus Gellius.' Letter to Nicodemo Tranchedino, sent from Siena to Rome, dated July 25, 1470.

<sup>123</sup> See this passage from a panegyric quoted by Angelo Mai:—'Tu profecto in hoc nostro deteriori sæculo hebraicæ, græcæ atque latinæ linguarum, omnium voluminum dignorum memoratu notitiam, eorumque auctores memoriæ tradidisti.'—*Vite di Uomini Illustri*, preface, p. xxiii.

vice and love of virtue were so genuine that, in his eagerness to honour men of letters and their patrons, he softened down harsh outlines and passed over all that is condemnable in silence. He was less anxious to paint character in the style of Tacitus or Guicciardini, than to relate what he knew about the progress of learning in his age. The ethical intention in his work is obvious. The qualities he loves to celebrate are piety, chastity, generosity, devotion to the cause of liberal culture, and high-souled patriotism. Of the vices that added a lurid lustre to the age in which he lived, of the political rancours that divided the cities into hostile parties, and of the imperfections in the characters of eminent men, we hear nothing from Vespasiano. It is pleasant to conclude this chapter with an expression of gratitude to a man so blameworthy in his life, so charitable in his judgment, and so trustworthy in his record of contemporary history.



## CHAPTER VI

### THIRD PERIOD OF HUMANISM

*Improvement in Taste and Criticism—Coteries and Academies—Revival of Italian Literature—Printing—Florence, the Capital of Learning—Lorenzo de' Medici and his Circle—Public Policy of Lorenzo—Literary Patronage—Variety of his Gifts—Meetings of the Platonic Society—Marsilio Ficino—His Education for Platonic Studies—Translations of Plato and the Neo-platonists—Harmony between Plato and Christianity—Giovanni Pico—His First Appearance in Florence—His Theses proposed at Rome—Censure of the Church—His Study of the Cabbala—Large Conception of Learning—Occult Science—Cristoforo Landino—Professor of Fine Literature—Virgilian Studies—Camaldolese Disputations—Leo Battista Alberti—His Versatility—Bartolommeo Scala—Obscure Origin—Chancellor of Florence—Angelo Poliziano—Early Life—Translation of Homer—The 'Homerici Juvenis'—True Genius in Poliziano—Command of Latin and Greek—Resuscitation of Antiquity in his own Person—His Professorial Work—The 'Miscellanea'—Relation to Medici—Roman Scholarship in this Period—Pius II.—Pomponius Letus—His Academy and Mode of Life—Persecution under Paul II.—Humanism at Naples—Pon'anus—His Academy—His Writings—Academies established in all Towns of Italy—Introduction of Printing—Sweynheim and Pannartz—The Early Venetian Press—Florence—Cennini—Alopo's Homer—Change in Scholarship effected by Printing—The Life of Aldo Manuzio—The Princely House of Pio at Carpi—Greek Books before Aldo—The Aldine Press at Venice—History of its Activity—Aldo and Erasmus—Aldo and the Greek Refugees—Aldo's Death—His Family and Successors—The Neacademia—The Salvation of Greek Literature.*

IN the four preceding chapters I have sketched the rise and progress of Italian humanism with more minuteness than need be now employed upon the history of its further development. By the scholars of the first and second period the whole domain of ancient literature was reconquered; the classics were restored in their integrity to the modern world. Petrarch first inflamed the enthusiasm without which so great a work could not have been accomplished, his immediate successors mastered the Greek language, and explored every province of antiquity. Much still remained, however, to be achieved by a new generation of students: for as yet criticism was but in its cradle; the graces of style were but little understood; indiscriminate erudition passed for scholarship, and crude verbiage for eloquence. The humanists of the third age, still burning with the zeal that animated Petrarch, and profiting by the labours of their predecessors, ascended to a higher level of culture. It is their glory to have purified the coarse and tumid style of mediæval Latinists, to have introduced the methods of comparative and æsthetic criticism, and to have distinguished the characteristics of the authors and the periods they studied.

The salient features of this third age of humanism may be briefly stated. Having done their work by sowing the seeds of culture broadcast, the vagrant professors of the second period begin to disappear, and the republic of letters tends to crystallise round men of eminence in coteries and learned circles. This, therefore, is the age of the academies. Secondly, it is noticeable that Italian literature, almost totally abandoned in the first fervour of enthusiasm for antiquity, now receives nearly as much attention as the classics. Since the revival of Italian in the golden age of the Renaissance will form the subject of my final volume, the names of Lorenzo de' Medici and Poliziano at Florence, of Boiardo at Ferrara, and of Sannazzaro at Naples may here suffice to indicate the points of contact between scholarship and the national literature. A century had been employed in the acquisition of humanistic culture; when acquired, it bore fruit, not only in more elegant scholarship, but also in new forms of poetry and prose for the people. A third marked feature of the period is the establishment of the printing press. The energy wherewith in little more than fifty years the texts of the classic authors were rendered indestructible by accident or time, and placed within the reach of students throughout Europe, demands particular attention in this chapter.

Florence is still the capital of learning. The most brilliant humanists, gathered round the person of Lorenzo de' Medici, give laws to the rest of Italy, determining by their tastes and studies the tone of intellectual society. Lorenzo is himself in so deep and true a sense the master spirit of this circle, that to describe his position in the republic will hardly be considered a digression.

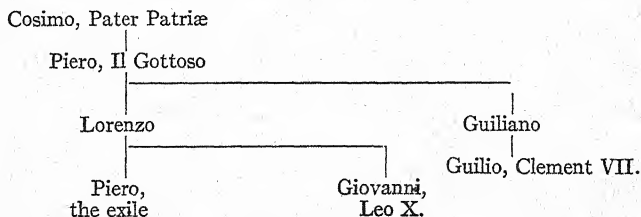
Before his death in 1464 Cosimo de' Medici had succeeded in rendering his family necessary to the State of Florence. Though thwarted by ambitious rivals and hampered by the intrigues of the party he had formed to rule the commonwealth, Cosimo contrived so to complicate the public finances with his own banking business, and so to bind the leading burghers to himself by various obligations, that, while he in no way affected the style of a despot, Florence belonged to his house more surely than Bologna to the Bentivogli. For the continuation of this authority, based on intrigue and cemented by corruption, it was absolutely needful that the spirit of Cosimo should survive in his successors. A single false move, by unmasking the tyranny so carefully veiled, by offending the republican vanities of the Florentines, or by employing force where everything had hitherto been gained by craft, would at this epoch have destroyed the prospects of the Medicean family. So true it is that the history of this age in Italy is not the history of commonwealths so much as the history of individualities, of men. The principles reduced to rule by Machiavelli in his essay on the Prince may be studied in the lives of fifteenth-century adventurers, who, like Cesare Borgia, discerned the necessity of using violence for special ends, or, like the Medici, perceived that sovereignty could be better grasped by a hand gloved with velvet than mailed in steel. The Medici of both

branches displayed through eight successive generations, in their general line of policy, in the disasters that attended their divergence from it, and in the means they used to rehabilitate their influence, the action of what Balzac calls *l'homme politique*, with striking clearness to the philosophic student.

Both the son and grandson of Cosimo well understood the part they had to play, and played it so ably that even the errors of the younger Piero, the genius of Savonarola, and the failure of the elder Medicean line were insufficient to check the gradual subjugation of the commonwealth he had initiated. Lorenzo's father, Piero, called by the Florentines *Il Gottoso*, suffered much from ill-health, and was unable to take the lead in politics.<sup>1</sup> Yet the powers entrusted to his father were confirmed for him. The elections remained in the hands of the Medicean party, and the *balia* appointed in their favour continued to control the State. The dangerous conspiracy against Piero's life, engaged in by Luca Pitti and Diotisalvi Neroni, proved that his enemies regarded the chief of the Medici as the leader of the republic. It was due to the prudent action of the young Lorenzo that this conspiracy failed; and the Medici were even strengthened by the downfall of their foes. From the tone of the congratulations addressed on this occasion by the ruling powers of Italy to Piero and Lorenzo, we may conclude that they were already reckoned as princes outside Florence, though they still maintained a burgherlike simplicity of life within the city walls.

In the marriage of his son Lorenzo to Clarice degli Orsini, of the princely Roman house, Piero gave signs of a departure from the cautious policy of Cosimo. Foreign alliances were regarded with suspicion by the Florentines, and Pandolfini's advice to his sons, that they should avoid familiarity with territorial magnates, exactly represented the spirit of the republic.<sup>2</sup> In like manner, the education of both Lorenzo and Giuliano, their intercourse with royal guests, and the prominent places assigned them on occasions of ceremony, indicated an advance toward despotism. It was concordant with the manners of the age that one family should play the part of host for the republic. The discharge of this duty by the Medici aroused no jealousy among the burghers; yet it enabled the ambitious house to place themselves in a unique posi-

<sup>1</sup> It may be useful to add a skeleton pedigree of the Medici in this place:—



<sup>2</sup> See Vol. I., *Age of the Despots*, p. 122.

tion, and, while seeming to remain mere citizens, to take a step in the direction of sovereignty.

On the death of Piero, in 1469, the chief men of the Medicean party waited upon Lorenzo, and, after offering their condolences, besought him to succeed his father in the presidency of the State. The feeling prevailed among the leaders of the city that it was impossible, under the existing conditions of Italian politics, to carry on the commonwealth without a titular head. Lorenzo, then in his twenty-second year, entered thus upon the political career in the course of which he not only maintained a balance of power in Italy, but also remodelled the internal government of Florence in the interests of his family, and further strengthened their position by establishing connections with the Papal See. While bending all the faculties of his powerful and subtle intellect to the one end of consolidating a tyranny, Lorenzo was far too wise to assume the bearing of a despot. He conversed familiarly with the citizens, encouraged artists and scholars to address him on terms of equality, and was careful to adopt no titles. His personal temperament made the task of being in effect a sovereign, while he acted like a citizen, comparatively easy, his chief difficulties arose from the necessity under which he laboured, like his grandfather Cosimo, of governing through a party composed of men distinguished by birth and ability, and powerful by wealth and connections. To keep this party in good temper, to flatter its members with the show of influence, and to gain their concurrence for the alterations he introduced into the State machinery of Florence, was the problem of his life. By creating a body of clients, bound to himself by diverse interests and obligations, he succeeded in bridling the Medicean party and excluding from offices of trust all dangerous and disaffected persons. The goodwill of the city at large was secured by the prosperity at home and peace abroad which marked the last fourteen years of his administration, while the splendour of his foreign alliances contributed in no small measure to his popularity. The Florentines were proud of a citizen who brought them into the first rank of Italian Powers, and who refrained from assuming the style of sovereign. Thus Lorenzo solved the most difficult of political problems—that of using a close oligarchy for the maintenance of despotism in a free and jealous commonwealth. None of his rivals retained power enough to withhold the sceptre from his sons when they should seek to grasp it.

The roots of the Medici clung to no one part of Florence in particular. They seemed superficial; yet they crept beneath the ground in all directions. Intertwined as they were with every interest both public and private in the city, to cut them out implied the excision of some vital member. This was the secret of their power in the next generation, when banished and reduced to bastards, the Medici returned from two exiles, survived the perils of the siege and Alessandro's murder, and finally assumed the Ducal crown in the person of the last scion of their younger branch. The policy, so persistently pursued for generations,

so powerfully applied by Lorenzo, might be compared to the attack of an octopus, which fastens on its victim by a multitude of tiny tentacles, and waits till he is drained of strength before it shoots its beak into a vital spot.

In one point Lorenzo was inferior to his grandfather. He had no commercial talent. After suffering the banking business of the Medici to fall into disorder, he became virtually bankrupt, while his personal expenditure kept continually increasing. In order to retrieve his fortunes it was necessary for him to gain complete disposal of the public purse. This was the real object of the constitutional revolution of 1480, whereby his Privy Council assumed the active functions of the State. Had Lorenzo been as great in finance as in the management of men, the way might have been smoothed for his son Piero in the disastrous year of 1494.

If Lorenzo neglected the pursuit of wealth, whereby Cosimo had raised himself from insignificance to the dictatorship of Florence, he surpassed his grandfather in the use he made of literary patronage. It is not paradoxical to affirm that in his policy we can trace the subordination of a genuine love of arts and letters to statecraft. The new culture was one of the instruments that helped to build his despotism. Through his thorough and enthusiastic participation in the intellectual interests of his age, he put himself into close sympathy with the Florentines, who were glad to acknowledge for their leader by far the ablest of the men of parts in Italy. According as we choose our point of view, we may regard him either as a tyrant, involving his country in debt and dangerous wars, corrupting the morals and enfeebling the spirit of the people, and systematically enslaving the Athens of the modern world for the sake of founding a petty principality; or else as the most liberal-minded noble of his epoch, born to play the first part in the Florentine republic, and careful to use his wealth and influence for the advancement of his fellow-citizens in culture, learning, arts, amenities of life. Savonarola and the Florentine historians adopt the former of these two opinions. Sismondi, in his passion for liberty, arrays against Lorenzo the political assassinations he permitted, the enervation of Florence, the national debt incurred by the republic, the exhausting wars with Sixtus carried on in his defence. His panegyrists, on the contrary, love to paint him as the pacificator of Italy, the restorer of Florentine poetry, the profound critic, and the generous patron. The truth lies in the combination of these two apparently contradictory judgments. Lorenzo was the representative man of his nation at a moment when political institutions were everywhere inclining to despotism, and when the spiritual life of the Italians found its noblest expression in art and literature. The principality of Florence was thrust upon him by the policy of Cosimo, by the vote of the chief citizens, and by the example of the sister republics, all of whom, with the exception of Venice, submitted to the sway of rulers. Had he wished, he might have found it difficult to preserve the commonwealth in its integrity. Few but doctrinaires believed

in a *governo misto*; only aristocrats desired a *governo stretto*; all but democrats dreaded a *governo largo*. And yet a new constitution must have been framed after one of these types, and the Florentines must have been educated to use it with discretion, before Lorenzo could have resigned his office of dictator with any prospect of freedom for the city in his charge. Such unselfish patriotism, in the face of such overwhelming difficulties, and in antagonism to the whole tendency of the age, was not to be expected from an oligarch of the Renaissance, born in the purple, and used from infancy to intrigue.

Lorenzo was a man of marvellous variety and range of mental power. He possessed one of those rare natures, fitted to comprehend all knowledge and to sympathise with the most diverse forms of life. While he never for one moment relaxed his grasp on politics, among philosophers he passed for a sage, among men of letters for an original and graceful poet, among scholars for a Grecian sensitive to every nicety of Attic idiom, among artists for an amateur gifted with refined discernment and consummate taste. Pleasure-seekers knew in him the libertine, who jostled with the boldest, danced and masqueraded with the merriest, sought adventures in the streets at night, and joined the people in their May-day games and Carnival festivities. The pious extolled him as an author of devotional lauds and mystery plays, a profound theologian, a critic of sermons. He was no less famous for his jokes and repartees than for his pithy apophthegms and maxims, as good a judge of cattle as of statues, as much at home in the bosom of his family as in the riot of an orgy, as ready to discourse on Plato as to plan a campaign or to plot the death of a dangerous citizen. An apologist may always plead that Lorenzo was the epitome of his nation's most distinguished qualities, that the versatility of the Renaissance found in him its fullest incarnation. It was the duty of Italy in the fifteenth century not to establish religious or constitutional liberty, but to resuscitate culture. Before the disastrous wars of invasion had begun, it might well have seemed even to patriots as though Florence needed a Mæcenas more than a Camillus. Therefore the prince who in his own person combined all accomplishments, who knew by sympathy and counsel how to stimulate the genius of men superior to himself in special arts and sciences, who spent his fortune lavishly on works of public usefulness, whose palace formed the rallying-point of wit and learning, whose council chamber was the school of statesmen, who expressed his age in every word and every act, in his vices and his virtues, his crimes and generous deeds, cannot be fairly judged by an abstract standard of republican morality. It is nevertheless true that Lorenzo enfeebled and enslaved Florence. At his death he left her socially more dissolute, politically weaker, intellectually more like himself, than he had found her. He had not the greatness to rise above the spirit of his century, or to make himself the Pericles instead of the Pisistratus of his republic. In other words, he was adequate, not superior, to Renaissance Italy.

This, then, was the man round whom the greatest scholars of the

third period assembled, at whose table sat Angelo Poliziano, Cristoforo Landino, Marsilio Ficino, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, Leo Battista Alberti, Michael Angelo Buonarroti, Luigi Pulci. The mere enumeration of these names suffices to awake a crowd of memories in the mind of those to whom Italian art and poetry are dear. Lorenzo's villas, where this brilliant circle met for grave discourse or social converse, heightening the sober pleasures of Italian country life with all that wit and learning could produce of delicate and rare, have been so often sung by poets and celebrated by historians that Careggi, Caffagiolo, and Poggio a Cajano are no less familiar to us than the studious shades of Academe. 'In a villa overhanging the towers of Florence,' writes the austere Hallam, moved to more than usual eloquence by the spirit-stirring beauty of his theme, 'on the steep slope of that lofty hill crowned by the mother city, the ancient Fiesole, in gardens which Tully might have envied, with Ficino, Landino, and Politian at his side, he delighted his hours of leisure with the beautiful visions of Platonic philosophy, for which the summer stillness of an Italian sky appears the most congenial accompaniment.' As we climb the steep slope of Fiesole, or linger beneath the rose-trees that shed their petals from Careggi's garden walls, once more in our imagination 'the world's great age begins anew,' once more the blossoms of that marvellous spring uncloseth. While the sun goes down beneath the mountains of Carrara, and the Apennines grow purple-golden, and Florence sleeps beside the silvery Arno, and the large Italian stars come forth above, we remember how those mighty master spirits watched the sphering of new planets in the spiritual skies. Savonarola in his cell below once more sits brooding over the servility of Florence, the corruption of a godless Church. Michael Angelo, seated between Ficino and Poliziano, with the voices of the prophets vibrating in his memory, and with the music of Plato sounding in his ears, rests chin on hand and elbow upon knee, like his own Jeremiah, lost in contemplation, whereof the after-fruit shall be the Sistine Chapel and the Medicean tombs. Then when the strain of thought, 'unsphering Plato from his skies,' begins to weary, Pulci breaks the silence with a brand-new canto of Morgante, or a singing boy is bidden to tune his mandoline to Messer Angelo's last-made *ballata*.

There is no difficulty in explaining Plato's power upon the thinkers of the fifteenth century. Among philosophers Plato shines like a morning star—*ὄρθ' ἑσπερος οὕτε ἑὸς σὺν θαυματός*—an auroral luminary, charming and compelling the attention of the world when man is on the verge of new discoveries. That he should have enslaved the finest intellects at a time when the sense of beauty was so keenly stimulated, and when the stirrings of fresh life were so intense, is nothing more than natural. To philosophise and humanise the religious sentiments that had become the property of monks and pardon-mongers; to establish a concordat between the Paganism that entranced the world, and the Catholic faith whereof the world was not yet weary; to satisfy the new-born sense of a divine and hitherto unapprehended mystery in



heaven and earth; to dignify with a semblance of truth the dreams of magic and astrology that passed for science—all this the men of the Renaissance passionately craved. Who could render better help than Plato and the Neo-platonists, whose charm of style and high-flown mysticism suited the ambitious immaturity of undeveloped thought? For the interpretation of Platonic doctrine a hierophant was needed. Marsilio Ficino had been set apart from earliest youth for this purpose—selected in the wisdom of Cosimo de' Medici, prepared by special processes of study, and consecrated to the service of the one philosopher.<sup>3</sup>

When Marsilio was a youth of eighteen, he entered the Medicean household, and began to learn Greek, in order that he might qualify himself for translating Plato into Latin. His health was delicate, his sensibilities acute; the temper of his intellect, inclined to mysticism and theology, fitted him for the arduous task of unifying religion with philosophy. It would be unfair to class him with the paganising humanists, who sought to justify their unbelief or want of morals by the authority of the classics. Ficino remained throughout his life an earnest Christian. At the age of forty, not without serious reflection and mature resolve, he took orders, and faithfully performed the duties of his cure. Antiquity he judged by the standard of the Christian creed. If he asserted that Socrates and Plato witnessed, together with the evangelists, to the truth of revelation, or that the same spirit inspired the laws of Moses and the Greek philosopher—this, as he conceived it, was in effect little else than extending the catena of authority backward from the Christian fathers to the sages of the ancient world. The Church, by admitting the sibyls into the company of the prophets, virtually sanctioned the canonisation of Plato; while the comprehensive survey of history as an uninterrupted whole, which since the days of Petrarch had distinguished the nobler type of humanism, rendered Ficino's philosophical religion not unacceptable even to the orthodox. The speculative mystics of the fifteenth century failed, however, to perceive that by recognising inspiration in the classic authors, they were silently denying the unique value of revelation; and that by seeking the religious tradition far and wide, they called in question the peculiar divinity of Christ. Savonarola saw this clearly; therefore he denounced the Platonists as heretics, who vainly babbled about things they did not understand. The permanent value of their speculations, crude and uncritical as they may now appear, consists in the large claim made for human reason as against bibliolatry and Church authority.

Ficino was forty-four years of age when he finished the translation of Plato's works in Latin. Five more years elapsed before the first edition was printed in 1482 at Filippo Valori's expense. It may here be mentioned incidentally that, by this help, the aristocracy of Florence materially contributed to the diffusion of culture. A genuine philosopher in his lack of ambition and his freedom from avarice, Ficino was too poor

<sup>3</sup> Marsilio Ficino, the son of Cosimo's physician, was born at Figline in 1433.

to publish his own works; and what is true of him, applies to many most distinguished authors of the age. Great literary undertakings involved in that century the substantial assistance of wealthy men, whose liberality was rewarded by a notice in the colophon or on the title-page.<sup>4</sup> When, for instance, the first edition of Homer was issued from the press by Lorenzo Alopa in 1488, two brothers of the Nerli family, Bernardo and Neri, defrayed the expense.<sup>5</sup> The Plato was soon followed by a Life of the philosopher, and a treatise on the 'Platonic Doctrine of Immortality.' The latter work is interesting as a repertory of the theories discussed by the Medicean circle at their festivals in honour of Plato's birthday. It has, however, no intrinsic value for the critic or philosopher, being in effect nothing better than a jumble of citations culled from antique mystics and combined with cruder modern guesses. In 1486 the translation of Plotinus was accomplished, and in 1491 a voluminous commentary had been added; both were published one month after Lorenzo's death in 1492. A version of Dionysius the Areopagite, whose treatise on the 'Hierarchies,' though rejected by Lorenzo Valla, was accepted as genuine by Ficino, closed the long list of his translations from the Greek. The importance of Ficino's contributions to philosophy consists in the impulse he communicated to Platonic studies. That he did not comprehend Plato, or distinguish his philosophy from that of the Alexandrian mystics, is clear in every sentence of his writings. The age was uncritical, nor had scholars learned the necessity of understanding an author's relation to the history of thought in general before they attempted to explain him. Thus they were satisfied to read Plato by the reflected light of Plotinus and Gemistos Plethon, and to assimilate such portions only of his teachings as accorded with their own theology. The doctrine of planetary influences, and the myths invented to express the nature of the soul—in other words, the consciously poetic thoughts of Plato—seemed of more value to Ficino than the theory of ideas, wherein the deepest problems are presented in a logical shape to the understanding. The Middle Ages had plied dialectic to satiety; the Renaissance dwelt with passion upon vague and misty thoughts that gave a scope to its imagination. No dreams of poet or of mystic could surpass reality in the age of Lionardo da Vinci and Christopher Columbus.

If Plato has been studied more exactly of late years, he has never been loved better or more devotedly worshipped than by the Florentine Academy. Who builds a shrine and burns a lamp before his statue now? Who crowns his bust with laurels, or celebrates his birthday and his deathday with solemn festivals and pompous panegyrics? Who meet at stated intervals to read his words, and probe his hidden meaning,

<sup>4</sup> Thus Ficino's edition of Plotinus, printed at Lorenzo de' Medici's expense, and published one month after his death, bears this notice:—'*Magnifici sumptu Laurentii patriæ servatoris*'

<sup>5</sup> See, however, Didot's *Alde Manuce*, p. 4, where Giovanni Acciaiuoli is credited with this generosity.

feeding his altar-flame with frankincense of their most precious thoughts? It was by outward signs like these, then full of fair significance, now puerile and void of import, that the pageant-loving men of the Renaissance testified their debt of gratitude to Plato. Of one of these birthday feasts Ficino has given a lively picture in his letter to Jacopo Bracciolini ('Prolegomena ad Platonis Symposium'). After partaking of a banquet, the text of the 'Symposium' was delivered over to discussion. Giovanni Cavalcanti interpreted the speeches of Phædrus and Pausanias, Landino that of Aristophanes; Carlo Marsuppini undertook the part of Agathon, while Tommaso Benci explained the esoteric meaning of Diotima. Was there anyone, we wonder, to act Alcibiades; or did Lorenzo, perhaps, sit drinking till day flooded the meadows of Valdarno, passing round a two-handled goblet, and raising subtle questions about comedy and tragedy?

Among the academicians who frequented Lorenzo's palace at Florence there appeared, in 1484, a young man of princely birth and fascinating beauty. 'Nature,' wrote Poliziano, 'seemed to have showered on this man, or hero, all her gifts. He was tall and finely moulded; from his face a something of divinity shone forth. Acute, and gifted with prodigious memory, in his studies he was indefatigable, in his style perspicuous and eloquent. You could not say whether his talents or his moral qualities conferred on him the greater lustre. Familiar with all branches of philosophy, and the master of many languages, he stood on high above the reach of praise.' This was Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, whose portrait in the Uffizzi Gallery, with its long brown hair and penetrating grey eyes, compels attention even from those who know not whom it is supposed to figure. He was little more than twenty when he came to Florence. His personal attractions, noble manners, splendid style of life, and varied accomplishments made him the idol of Florentine society; and for a time he gave himself, in part at least, to love and the amusements of his age.<sup>6</sup> But Pico was not born for pleasure. By no man was the sublime ideal of humanity, superior to physical enjoyments and dignified by intellectual energy, that triumph of the thought of the Renaissance, more completely realised.<sup>7</sup> There is even reason to regret that, together with the follies of youth, he put aside the collection of his Latin poems, which Poliziano praised, and took no pains to pre-

<sup>6</sup> See Von Reumont, vol. ii. p. 108.

<sup>7</sup> Fine expression was given to this conception of life by Aldus in the dedication to Alberto Pio of vols. ii., iii., iv. of Aristotle:—'Es nam tu mihi optimus testis an potiores Herculis ærumnas credam, sævosque labores, et Venere, et cœnis et plumis Sardanapali. Natus nam homo est ad laborem et ad agendum semper aliquid viro dignum, non ad voluptatem quæ belluarum est et pecudum.' The last sentence is a translation of Ulysses' speech in the *Inferno*—

'Considerate là vostra semenza,  
Fatti non foste a viver come bruti,  
Ma per seguir virtude e conoscenza.'

Cf. Aldus's preface to Lascaris' Grammar; Renouard, vol. i. p. 7; and again *Alde Manuce*, p. 143, for similar passages.

serve those Italian verses, the loss whereof we deplore no less than that of Lionardo's. While Pico continued to live as became a count of Mirandola, he personally inclined each year to graver and more abstruse studies and to greater austerity, until at last the prince was merged in the philosopher, the man of letters in the mystic.

Pico's abilities displayed themselves in earliest boyhood. His mother, a niece of the great Boiardo, noticed his rare aptitude for study, and sent him at the age of fourteen to Bologna. There he mastered not only the humanities, but also what was taught of mathematics, logic, philosophy, and Oriental languages. He afterwards continued his education at Paris, the head-quarters of scholastic theology. Pico's powerful memory must have served him in good stead: it is recorded that a single reading fixed the language and the matter of the texts he studied on his mind for ever. Nor was this faculty for retaining knowledge accompanied by any sluggishness of mental power. To what extent he relied upon his powers of debate as well as on his vast stores of erudition, was proved by the publication of the famous nine hundred theses at Rome in 1486. These questions seem to have been constructed in defence of the Platonic mysticism, which already had begun to absorb his attention. The philosophers and theologians who were challenged to contend with him in argument had the whole list offered to their choice. Pico was prepared to maintain each and all of his positions without further preparation. Ecclesiastical prudence, however, prevented the champions of orthodoxy from descending into the arena. They found it safer to prefer a charge of heresy against Pico, whose theses were condemned in a brief of Innocent VIII., dated August 5, 1486. It was not until June 18, 1493, that he was finally purged from the ban of heterodoxy by a brief of Alexander VI. During that long interval he suffered much uneasiness of mind, for even his robust intelligence quailed before the thought of dying under Papal interdiction. That a man so pure in his life and so earnest in his piety should have been stigmatised as a heretic, and then pardoned, by two such Popes, is one of the curious anomalies of that age.

To harmonise the Christian and classical tradition was a problem which Manietti had crudely attempted. Pico approached it in a more philosophical spirit, and resolved to devote his whole life to the task. The antagonism between sacred and profane literature appeared more glaring to Renaissance scholars than to us, inasmuch as they attached more serious value to the teaching of the latter as a rule of life. Yet Pico was not intent so much on merely reconciling hostile systems of thought, or on confuting the errors of the Jews and Gentiles. He had conceived the great idea of the unity of knowledge; and having acquired the *omne scibile* of his century, he sought to seize the soul of truth that animates all systems. Not the classics nor the Scriptures alone, but the writings of the schoolmen, the glosses of Arabic philosophers, and the more obscure products of Hebrew erudition had for him their solid value. Estimating authors at the worth of their matter, and despising the

trivial questions raised by shallow wits among style-mongering students, he freed himself from the worst fault of humanism, and conceived of learning in a liberal spirit. The best proof of this wide acceptance of all literature conducive to sound thinking is given in a letter to Ermolao Barbaro.<sup>8</sup> After courteously adverting to the ciceronian elegance of his correspondent's style he continues, 'And that I meantime should have lost in the studies of Thomas Aquinas, John Scotus, Albertus Magnus, and Averrhoes the best years of my life—those long, laborious vigils wherein I might perchance have made myself of some avail in polite scholarship! The thought occurred to me, by way of consolation, if some of them could come to life again, whether men so powerful in argument might not find some pleas for their own cause; whether one among them, more eloquent than Paul, might not defend, in terms as free as possible from barbarism, their barbarous style, speaking perchance after this fashion: We have lived illustrious, friend Ermolao, and to posterity shall live, not in the schools of the grammarians and teaching-places of young minds, but in the company of the philosophers, conclaves of sages, where the questions for debate are not concerning the mother of Andromache or the sons of Niobe and such light trifles, but of things human and divine; in the contemplation, investigation, and analysis whereof we have been so subtle, searching, and eager that we may sometimes have seemed to be too scrupulous and captious, if indeed it be possible to be too curious or fastidious in seeking after truth. Let him who accuses us of dulness, prove by experience whether we barbarians have not the god of eloquence in our hearts rather than on our lips; whether, if the faculty of ornamented speech be lacking, we have wanted wisdom: and to trick out wisdom with ornaments may be more a crime than to show it in uncultured rudeness.'

During the period of his Platonic studies at Florence chance brought Pico into contact with a Jew who had a copy of the Cabbala for sale. Into this jungle of abstruse learning Pico plunged with all the ardour of his powerful intellect. Asiatic fancies, Alexandrian myths, Christian doctrines, Hebrew traditions, are so wonderfully blended in that labyrinthine commentary that Pico believed he had discovered the key to his great problem, the quintessence of all truth. It seemed to him that the science of the Greek and the faith of the Christian could only be understood in the light of the Cabbala. He purchased the MS., devoted his whole attention to its study, and projected a mighty work to prove the harmony of philosophies in Christianity, and to explain the Christian doctrine by the esoteric teaching of the Jews.<sup>9</sup> Pico's view of the connection between philosophy, theology, and religion is plainly stated in the following sentence from a letter to Aldus Manutius (February 11, 1491):—'*Philosophia veritatem quærit, theologia inventi, religio possidet*' (Philosophy seeks truth, theology discovers it, religion hath it).

<sup>8</sup> Dated Florence, 1485; in the Aldine edition of Poliziano's Letters, book ix.

<sup>9</sup> In the introduction to Pico's *Apologia* may be read the account he gives of the codex of the pseudo Esdras purchased by him.

Death overtook him before the book intended to demonstrate these positions, and by so doing to establish the concord of all earnest and truth-seeking systems, could be written. He died at the age of thirty-one, on the very day when Charles VIII. made his entry into Florence.

While accepting the Cabbala it was impossible for Pico to reject magic. He showed his good sense, however, by an energetic attack upon the so-called science of judicial astrology. Strictly speaking, the spirit of humanism was opposed to this folly. Petrarch had long ago condemned it, together with the charlatans who used its jargon to impose upon the world; yet, in spite of humanism, the folly not only persisted, but seemed to increase with the spread of rational knowledge. The universities founded Chairs of Astrology, Popes consulted the stars on occasions of importance, nor did the Despots dare to act without the advice of their soothsayers. These men not unfrequently accompanied the greatest generals on their campaigns. Their services were bought by the republics; citizens employed them for the casting of horoscopes, the building of houses, the position of shops, the fit moment for journeys, the reception of guests into their families, and the date of weddings. To take a serious step in life without the approval of an astrologer had come to be regarded as perilous. Even Ficino believed in horoscopes and planetary influences; so did Cardan at a later date. It may be remembered that Catherine de' Medici allowed the Florentine Ruggieri to share her secret counsels during the reigns of three kings, and that Paul III. always obtained the sanction of his star-gazer before he held a consistory. In proportion as religion grew less real, and the complex dangers of a corrupt society increased, astrology gained in importance. It was not, therefore, a waste of eloquence, as Poliziano complained, when Pico directed his attack against this delusion, accusing it of debasing the intellect and opening the way for immorality of all kinds.<sup>10</sup>

Since Pico's keen intellect discerned the shallowness of astrological pretensions, it is the more to be deplored that he fell a victim to the hybrid mysticism and magical nonsense of the Cabbala. We have here another proof that criticism was as yet in its infancy. It was easier for men of genius in the Renaissance to win lofty vantage-ground for contemplation, to divine the unity of human achievements, and to comprehend the greatness of the destiny of man, than to accept the learning of the past at a simple historical valuation. What fascinated their imagination passed with them too easily for true and proved. Yet all they needed was time for the digestion and assimilation of the stores of

<sup>10</sup> Poliziano's Greek epigram addressed to Pico on this matter may be quoted from the *Carmina Quinque Poetarum*, p. 412:—

καὶ τοῦτ' ἀστρολόγοις ἐπιμέφομαι ἡερογέσχαῖς,  
ὅτι σοφοὺς Πίκου μοι φθονέουσ' ἕαρου.  
καὶ γὰρ ὁ ἐνδουκῶς τούτων τὸν γῆρον ἐλέγχων  
μουνάξει ἐν ἀγρῷ δηρὸν ἐκὰς πρόγῃως.  
Πῖκε τί σοι καὶ τούτοις; οὐ σ' ἐπέουκεν ἀγύρταις  
ἀντάραι τὴν σὴν εὐτυχέα γραφίδα.

knowledge they had gained. If the Counter-Reformation had not checked the further growth of Italian science, the spirit that lived in Pico would certainly have produced a school of philosophy second to none that Europe has brought forth. Of this Pico's own short treatise on the 'Dignity of Man,' as I have said already, is sufficient warrant.

As Pico was the youngest so was Cristoforo Landino the oldest member of the Medicean circle. He was born at Florence in 1424, nine years before Ficino, with whom he shared the duties of instructing Lorenzo in his boyhood. Landino obtained the Chair of Rhetoric and Poetry in 1457, and continued till his death in 1504 to profess Latin literature at Florence. While Ficino and Pico represented the study of philosophy, he devoted himself exclusively to scholarship, annotating Horace and Virgil, and translating Pliny's 'Natural Histories.' A marked feature in Landino's professorial labours was the attention he paid to the Italian poets. In 1460 he began to lecture on Petrarch, and in 1481 he published an edition of Dante with voluminous commentaries. The copy of this work, printed upon parchment, splendidly bound, and fastened with niello clasps, which Landino presented with a set oration to the Signory of Florence, may still be seen in the Magliabecchian library. The author was rewarded with a house in Borgo alla Collina, the ancient residence of his family.

Though the name of Cristoforo Landino is now best known in connection with his Dantesque studies, one of his Latin works, the 'Camaldolense Discussions,'<sup>11</sup> will always retain peculiar interest for the student of Florentine humanism. This treatise is composed in imitation of the Ciceronian rather than the Platonic dialogues; the 'Tusculans' may be said to have furnished Landino with his model. He begins by telling how he left his villa in the Casentino, accompanied by his brother, to pay a visit to the hill-set sanctuary of St. Romualdo.<sup>12</sup> There he met with Lorenzo and Giuliano de' Medici, attended by noble youths of Florence—Piero and Donato Acciaiuoli, Alamanno Rinuccini, Marco Parenti, and Antonio Canigiani—all of whom had quitted Florence to enjoy the rest of summer coolness among the firs and chestnuts of the Apennines. The party thus formed was completed by the arrival of Leo Battista Alberti and Marsilio Ficino. The conversation maintained from day to day by these close friends and ardent scholars forms the substance of the dialogue. Seated on the turf beside a fountain, near the spot where Romualdo was bidden in his trance to exchange the black robes of the Benedictine Order for the snow-white livery of angels, they not unnaturally began to compare the active life that they had left at Florence with the contemplative life of philosophers and saints. Alberti led the conversation by a panegyric of the βίος θεωρητικός, maintaining the Platonic thesis with a wealth of illustration and a charm of eloquence peculiar to himself. Lorenzo took up the argument in

<sup>11</sup> *Disputationum Camaldulensium* lib. iv., dedicated to Frederick of Urbino.

<sup>12</sup> The legend of the foundation of this Order is well known through Sacchi's picture in the Vatican.



favour of the βίος πρακτικός. If Alberti proved that solitude and meditation are the nurses of great spirits, that man by communing with nature enters into full possession of his mental kingdom, Lorenzo pointed out that this completion of self-culture only finds its use and value in the commerce of the world. The philosopher must descend from his altitude and mix with men, in order to exercise the faculties matured by contemplation. Thus far the artist and the statesman are supposed to hold debate on Goethe's celebrated distich—

Es bildet ein Talent sich in der Stille,  
Sich ein Charakter in dem Strom der Welt.

The audience decided, in the spirit of the German poet, that a fully-formed man, the possessor of both character and talent, must submit himself to each method of training. Thus ended the first day's discussion. During the three following days Alberti led the conversation to Virgil's poetry, demonstrating its allegorical significance, and connecting its hidden philosophy with that of Plato. It is clear that in this part of his work Landino was presenting the substance of his own Virgilian studies. The whole book, like Castiglione's 'Courtier,' supplies a fair sample of the topics on which social conversation turned among refined and cultivated men. The tincture of Platonism is specially characteristic of the Medicean circle.

The distinguished place allotted in this dialogue to Leo Battista Alberti proves the singular regard in which this most remarkable man was held at Florence, where, however, he but seldom resided. His name will always be coupled with that of Lionardo da Vinci; for though Lionardo, arriving at a happier moment, has eclipsed Alberti's fame, yet both of them were cast in the same mould. Alberti, indeed, might serve as the very type of those many-sided, precocious, and comprehensive men of genius who only existed in the age of the Renaissance. Physical strength and dexterity were given to him at birth in measure equal to his mental faculties. It is recorded that he could jump standing over an upright man, pierce the strongest armour with his arrows, and so deftly fling a coin that it touched the highest point of a church or palace roof. The wildest horses are said to have trembled under him, as though brutes felt, like men, the magnetism of his personality. His insight into every branch of knowledge seemed intuitive, and his command of the arts was innate. At the age of twenty he composed the comedy of 'Philodoxius,' which passed for an antique, and was published by the Aldi as the work of Lepidus Comicus in 1588. Of music, though he had not made it a special study, he was a thorough master, composing melodies that gave delight to scientific judges. He painted pictures, and wrote three books on painting; practised architecture and compiled ten books on building. Of his books, chiefly portraits, nothing remains; but the Church of S. Andrea at Mantua, the Palazzo Rucellai at Florence, and the remodelled Church of S. Francesco at Rimini attest his

greatness as an architect. The façade of the latter building is more thoroughly classical than any other monument of the earlier Renaissance. As a transcript from Roman antiquity it ranks with the Palazzo della Ragione of Palladio at Vicenza. While still a young man, Alberti, overtaxed, in all probability, by the prodigious activity of his mental and bodily forces, suffered from an illness that resulted in a partial loss of memory. The humanistic and legal studies on which he was engaged had to be abandoned; yet, nothing daunted, he now turned his plastic genius to philosophy and mathematics, rightly judging that they make less demand upon the passive than the active vigour of the mind. It is believed that he anticipated some modern discoveries in optics, and he certainly advanced the science of perspective. Like his compeer Lionardo, he devoted attention to mechanics, and devised machinery for raising sunken ships. Like Lionardo, again, he was never tired of interrogating nature, conducting curious experiments, and watching her more secret operations. As a physiognomist and diviner, he acquired a reputation bordering on wizardry. It was as though his exquisite sensibilities and keenness of attention had gifted him with second sight. The depth of his sympathy with the outer world is proved by an assertion of his anonymous biographer that, when he saw the cornfields and vineyards of autumn, tears gathered to his eyes. All living creatures that had beauty won his love, and even in old persons he discovered a charm appropriate to old age. Foreigners, travellers, and workmen skilled in various crafts formed his favourite company, for in the acquisition of varied knowledge he was indefatigable. In general society his wisdom and his wit, the eloquence of his discourse and the brilliance of his improvisation, rendered him most fascinating. Collections of maxims culled from his table talk were made, whereof the anonymous biography contains a fair selection. At the same time we are told that, in the midst of sparkling sallies or close arguments, he would suddenly subside into reverie, and sit at table lost in silent contemplation. Alberti was one of the earliest writers of pure Italian prose at the period of its revival; but this part of his intellectual activity belongs to the history of Italian literature, and need not be touched on here. It is enough to have glanced thus briefly at one of the most attractive, sympathy-compelling figures of the fifteenth century.

In order to complete the picture of the Florentine circle, we have in the last place to notice two men raised by the Medici from the ranks of the people. 'I came to the republic, bare of all things, a mere beggar, of the lowest birth, without money, rank, connections, or kindred. Cosimo, the father of his country, raised me up, by receiving me into his family.' So wrote Bartolommeo Scala,<sup>13</sup> the miller's son, who lived to be the Chancellor of Florence. The splendour of that office had been considerably diminished since the days when Bruni, Marsuppini, and Poggio held it; nor could Scala, as a student, bear comparison with

<sup>13</sup> Born at Colle in 1430.

those men. His Latin history of the first crusade was rather a large than a great work, of which no notice would be taken if Tasso had not used it in the composition of his epic. Honours and riches, however, were accumulated on the Chancellor in such profusion that he grew arrogant, and taunted the great Poliziano with inferiority. The feud between these men was not confined to literature. Scala's daughter, a far better scholar than himself, attracted Poliziano's notice, and Greek epigrams were exchanged between them. The dictator of Italian letters now sought the hand of the fair Alessandra, who was rich not only in learning but in world's gear also. When she gave herself to Michael Marullus Tarcagnota, a Greek, his anger knew no bounds; instead of penning amatory he now composed satiric epigrams, abusing Marullus in Latin no less than he had praised Alessandra in Greek.<sup>14</sup>

Angelo Poliziano was born in 1454. His name, so famous in Italian literature, is a Latinised version of his birthplace, Montepulciano. His father, Benedetto Ambrogini, was a man of some consequence, but of small means, who fell a victim to the enmity of private foes among his fellow-citizens, leaving his widow and five young children almost wholly unprovided for.<sup>15</sup> This accounts for the obscurity that long enveloped the history of Poliziano's childhood, and also for the doubts expressed about the surname of his family. At the age of ten he came to study in the University of Florence, where he profited by the teaching of Landino, Argyropoulos, Andronicos Kallistos, and Ficino. The precocity of his genius displayed itself in Latin poems and Greek epigrams composed while he was yet a boy. At thirteen years of age he published Latin letters; at seventeen he distributed Greek poems among the learned men of Florence; at eighteen he edited Catullus, with the boast that he had shown more zeal than any other student in the correction and illustration of the ancients. As early as the year 1470 he had not only conceived the ambitious determination to translate Homer into Latin verse, but had already begun upon the second Iliad. The first book was known to scholars in Marsuppini's Latin version. Poliziano

<sup>14</sup> The following verses on Alessandra are so curious a specimen of Poliziano's Greek style that I transcribe them here (*Carmina Quinque Illustrum Poetarum*, p. 304):—

εὐρηχ' εὐρηχ' ἦν θέλον, ἦν ἐξήτεον αἰεὶ,  
 ἦν ἦτον τὸν ἔρωθ', ἦν καὶ ὄνειροπόλουν'  
 παρθενικὴν ἦς κάλλος ἀκήρατον, ἦς ὄγε κόσμος  
 οὐκ εἶη τέχνης ἀλλ' ἀφελοῦς φύσεως  
 παρθενικὴν γλώττησιν ἐπ' ἀμφοτέρῃσι κομῶσαν,  
 ἔσοχον ἔντε χοροῖς ἔσοχον ἔντε λύρα'  
 ἦς περὶ σωφροσύνη τ' εἶη χαρίτεσσι θ' ἀμίλλα,  
 τῇ καὶ τῇ ταύτῃ ἀντιμεθελοκομῆναις.  
 εὐρηκ' οὐδ' ὄφελος, καὶ γὰρ μόλις εἰς ἐνιαυτὸν  
 οἰστρουῖντι φλογερῶς ἔστιν ἀπαξ ἰδέειν.

The satires on Mabilius (so he called Marullus) are too filthy to be quoted. They may be read in the collection cited above, pp. 275-280.

<sup>15</sup> See Carducci, preface to *Le Stanze*, Florence, 1863, and Isidoro del Lungo in *Arch. Stor.* series iii. vol. ii.

carried his own translation as far as the end of the fifth book, gaining for himself the proud title of *Homericus juvenis*; further than this, for reasons unexplained, he never advanced, so that the last wish of Nicholas V., the chief desire of fifteenth-century scholarship—a Latin Iliad in hexameters—remained still unaccomplished.

The fame of this great undertaking attracted universal attention to Poliziano. It is probable that Ficino first introduced him to Lorenzo de' Medici, who received the young student into his own household, and made himself responsible for his future fortunes. 'The liberality of Lorenzo de' Medici, that great and wise man,' wrote Poliziano in after years, 'raised me from obscure and humble station where my birth had placed me, to that degree of dignity and distinction I now enjoy, with no other recommendation than my literary abilities.' Before he had reached the age of thirty, Poliziano professed the Greek and Latin literatures in the University of Florence, and received the care of Lorenzo's children. If Lorenzo represents the statecraft of his age, Poliziano is no less emphatically the representative of its highest achievements in scholarship. He was the first Italian to combine perfect mastery over Latin and a correct sense of Greek with a splendid genius for his native literature. Filelfo boasted that he could write both classic languages with equal ease, and exercised his prosy muse in *terza rima*. But Filelfo had no fire of poetry, no sense of style. Poliziano, on the contrary, was a born poet, a *sacer vates* in the truest sense of the word. I shall have to speak elsewhere of his Italian verses: those who have studied them know that the 'Orfeo,' the 'Stanze,' and the 'Rime' justify Poliziano's claim to the middle place of honour between Petrarch and Ariosto. Italian poetry took a new direction from his genius, and everything he penned was fruitful of results for the succeeding generation. Of his Latin poetry, in like manner, I propose to treat at greater length in the following chapter.

The spirit of Roman literature lived again in Poliziano. If he cannot be compared with the Augustan authors, he will pass muster at least with the poets of the silver age. Neither Statius nor Ausonius produced more musical hexameters, or expressed their feeling for natural beauty in phrases marked with more spontaneous grace. Of his Greek elegiacs only a few specimens survive. These, in spite of certain licenses not justified by pure Greek prosody, might claim a place in the 'Anthology,' among the epigrams of Agathias and Paulus Silentiarius.<sup>16</sup> The Doric couplets on two beautiful boys, and the love sonnet to the youth Chrysocomus, read like extracts from the *Μοῦσα παιδική*.<sup>17</sup> What is

<sup>16</sup> Julius Cæsar Scaliger wrote thus about them in the *Hypercriticus*:—'Græcis vero, quæ puerum se conscripsisse dicit, ætatem minus prudenter apposuit suam; tam enim bona sunt ut ne virum quidem Latina æque bene scripsisse putem.'

<sup>17</sup> *Quinque Illustrum Poetarum Carmina*, pp. 299, 301. These epigrams, as well as two on pp. 303, 307, are significant in their illustration of the poet's morality. Giovio's account of Poliziano's death was certainly accepted by contemporaries:—'*Ferunt eum ingenui adolescentis insano amore percitum facile in letalem morbum incidisse.*' The whole *Elogium*, however, is a covert libel, like many of Giovio's sketches.

remarkable about the Greek and Latin poetry of Poliziano is that the flavour of the author's Italian style transpires in them. They are no mere imitations of the classics. The 'roseate fluency' of the 'Rime' reappears in these *prolusiones*, making it manifest that the three languages were used with equal facility, and that on each of them the poet set the seal of his own genius.

What has been said about his verse, applies with no less force to his prose composition. Poliziano wrote Latin, as though it were a living language, not culling phrases from Cicero or reproducing the periods of Livy, but trusting to his instinct and his ear, with the facility of conscious power. The humanism of the first and second periods attained to the freedom of fine art in Poliziano. Through him, as through a lens, the rays of previous culture were transmitted in a column of pure light. He realised what the Italians had been striving after—the new birth of antiquity in a living man of the modern world. By way of modifying this high panegyric, it may be conceded that Poliziano had the defects of his qualities. Using Latin with the freedom of a master, he was not careful to purge his style of obsolete words and far-fetched phrases, or to maintain the diction of one period in each composition. His fluency betrayed him into verbiage, and his descriptions are often more diffuse than vigorous. Nor will he bear comparison with some more modern scholars on the point of accuracy. The merit, however, remains to him of having been the most copious and least slavish interpreter of the ancient to the modern world. His very imperfections, when judged by the standard of Bembo, place him above the purists, inasmuch as he possessed the power and courage to express himself in his own idiom, instead of treading cautiously in none but Ciceronian or Virgilian foot-prints.

As a professor, none of the humanists achieved more brilliant successes than Poliziano. Among his pupils could be numbered the chief students of Europe. Not to mention Italians, it will suffice to record the names of Reuchlin, Grocin, Linacre, and the Portuguese Tessiras, who carried each to his own country the culture they had gained in Florence. The first appearance of Poliziano in the lecture-room was not calculated to win admiration. Ill-formed, with eyes that had something of a squint in them, and a nose of disproportionate size, he seemed more fit to be a solitary scholar than the Orpheus of the classic literature.<sup>18</sup> Yet no sooner had he opened his lips and begun to speak, with the exquisite and varied intonations of a singularly beautiful voice, than his listeners were chained to their seats. The ungainliness of the teacher was forgotten; charmed through their ears and their intellect, they

<sup>18</sup> 'Erat distortis sæpe moribus, uti facie nequaquam ingenuâ et liberali ab enormi presertim naso, subluscoque oculo perabsurdâ.' Giovin, *Elogia*. Cf. Poliziano's own verses to Mabilius, beginning:—

Quod nasum mihi, quod reflexa colla  
Demens objicis.

*Carmina Quinque Poetarum*, p. 277.

eagerly drank in his eloquence, applauding the improvisations where-with he illustrated the spirit and intention of his authors, and silently absorbing the vast and well-ordered stores of knowledge he so prodigally scattered. It would not be profitable to narrate here at any length what is known about the topics of these lectures. Poliziano not only covered the whole ground of classic literature during the years of his professorship, but also published the notes of courses upon Ovid, Suetonius, Statius, the younger Pliny, the writers of Augustan histories, and Quintilian. Some of his best Latin poems were written by way of preface to the authors he explained in public. Virgil was celebrated in the 'Manto,' and Homer in the 'Ambra;' the 'Rusticus' served as prelude to the 'Georgics,' while the 'Nutricia' formed an introduction to the study of ancient and modern poetry. Nor did he confine his attention to fine literature. The curious prælection in prose called 'Lamia' was intended as a prelude to the prior 'Analytics' of Aristotle. Among his translations must be mentioned Epictetus, Herodian, Hippocrates, Galen, Plutarch's 'Eroticus,' and the 'Charmides' of Plato. His greatest achievement, however, was the edition of the 'Pandects' of Justinian from the famous MS. of which Florence had robbed Pisa, as the Pisans had previously taken it from Amalfi. It must not be forgotten that all these undertakings involved severe labours of correction and criticism. MSS. had to be compared and texts settled, when as yet the apparatus for this higher form of scholarship was miserably scanty. Though students before Poliziano had understood the necessity of collating codices, determining their relative ages, and tracing them, if possible, to their authoritative sources, he was the first to do this systematically and with judgment. To emendation he only had recourse when the text seemed hopeless. His work upon the 'Pandects' alone implies the expenditure of enormous toil.

The results of Poliziano's more fugitive studies, and some notes of conversations on literary topics with Lorenzo, were published in 1489 under the title of 'Miscellanea.'<sup>19</sup> The form was borrowed from the 'Noctes Atticæ' of Aulus Gellius; in matter this collection anticipated the genial criticisms of Erasmus. The excitement caused by its appearance is vividly depicted in the following letter of Jacopus Antiquarius, secretary to the Duke of Milan:<sup>20</sup>—'Going lately, according to my custom, into one of the public offices, I found a number of the young clerks neglecting their prince's business, and lost in the study of a book which had been distributed in sheets among them. When I asked what new book had appeared, they answered, Politian's "Miscellanies." I mounted their desk, sat down among them, and began to read with equal eagerness. But, as I could not spend much time there, I sent at once to the bookseller's stall for a copy of the work.' By this time Poliziano's

<sup>19</sup> The first words of the dedication run as follows:—'Cum tibi superioribus diebus Laurenti Medices, nostra hæc Miscellanea *inter equitandum* recitaremus.'

<sup>20</sup> *Angeli Politiani Epistolæ*, lib. iii. ed. Ald. 1498. The letter is dated Nov. 1488.

fame had eclipsed that of all his contemporaries. He corresponded familiarly with native and foreign princes, and held a kind of court at Florence among men of learning who came from all parts of Italy to converse with him. This popularity grew even burdensome, or at any rate he affected to find it so. 'Does a man want a motto for his sword's hilt or a posy for a ring,' he writes,<sup>21</sup> 'an inscription for his bedroom or a device for his plate, or even for his pots and pans, he runs like all the world to Politian. There is hardly a wall I have not besmeared, like a snail, with the effusions of my brain. One teases me for catches and drinking-songs, another for a grave discourse, a third for a serenade, a fourth for a Carnival ballad.' In executing these commissions he is said to have shown great courtesy; nor did they probably cost him much trouble, for in all his work he was no less rapid than elegant. He boasted that he had dictated the translation of Herodian while walking up and down his room, within the space of a day or two; and the chief fault of his verses is their fluency.

It still remains to speak of Poliziano's personal relations to the Medicean family. When he first entered the household of Lorenzo, he undertook the tuition of his patron's sons, and continued to superintend their education until their mother Clarice saw reason to mistrust his personal influence. There were, no doubt, many points in the great scholar's character that justified her thinking him unfit to be the constant companion of young men. Whatever may be the truth about the cause of his last illness, enough remains of his Greek and Italian verses to prove that his morality was lax, and his conception of life rather Pagan than Christian.<sup>22</sup> Clarice contrived that he should not remain under the same roof with her children; and though his friendly intercourse with the Medicean family continued uninterrupted, it would seem that after 1480 he only gave lessons in the classics to his former pupils.

Poliziano, proud as he was of his attainments, lacked the nobler quality of self-respect. He condescended to flatter Lorenzo, and to beg for presents, in phrases that remind us of Filelfo's prosiest epigrams.<sup>23</sup> That a scholar should vaunt his own achievements<sup>24</sup> and extol his patron to the skies, that he should ask for money and set off his panegyrics against payment, seemed not derogatory to a man of genius in the fifteenth century. Yet those habits of literary mendicancy and toad-eating proved a most pernicious influence. Italian literature never lost the superlatives and exaggerations imported by the humanists, and Pietro Aretino may be called the lineal descendant of Filelfo and Poliziano.

<sup>21</sup> In a letter to Hieronymus Donatus, dated Florence, May 1480, *Angeli Politiani Epistolæ*, lib. ii.

<sup>22</sup> The well-known scandal about Poliziano's death is traceable to the *Elogia* of Paulus Jovius—very suspicious authority. See above, p. 488, note 17.

<sup>23</sup> The most curious of these elegiac poems are given in *Carmina Quinque Illustrum Poetarum*, p. 234. It is possible that their language ought not to be taken literally, and that they concealed a joke now lost.

<sup>24</sup> Poliziano's letter to Matthias Corvinus is a good example of his self-laudation.



It must be allowed that to overpraise Lorenzo from a scholar's point of view would have been difficult, while the affection that bound the student to his patron was genuine. Poliziano, who watched Lorenzo in his last moments, described the scene of his death in a letter marked by touching sorrow which he addressed to Antiquari, and proved by the Latin monody which he composed and left unfinished, that grief for his dead master could inspire his muse with loftier strains than any expectation of future favours while he lived had done.

Two years after Lorenzo's death Poliziano died himself, dishonoured and suspected by the Piagnoni. Savonarola had swept the Carnival chariots and masks and gimcracks of Lorenzo's holiday reign into the dust-heap. Instead of *rispetti* and *ballate*, the refrain of Misereres filled the city, and the Dominican's prophecy of blood and ruin drowned with its thundrous reverberations the scholarlike disquisitions of Greek professors. Poliziano's lament for Lorenzo was therefore, as it were, a prophecy of his own fate:

Quis dabit capiti meo  
Aquam? quis oculis meis  
Fontem lachrymarum dabit?  
Ut nocte fleam,  
Ut luce fleam.  
Sic turtur viduus solet,  
Sic cygnus moriens solet,  
Sic lusciniâ conqueri.

'Oh that my head were waters and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night! So mourns the widowed turtle dove; so mourns the dying swan; so mourns the nightingale.' Into these passionate words of wailing unique in the literature of humanism by their form alike and feeling, breaks the threnody of the abandoned scholar. 'Ah, woe! Ah, woe is me! O grief! O grief! Lightning hath struck our laurel tree, our laurel dear to all the Muses and the dances of the Nymphs, beneath whose spreading boughs the God of Song himself more sweetly harped and sang. Now all around is dumb; now all is mute, and there is none to hear. Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears!'

This at least of grace the gods allowed Poliziano, that he should die in the same year as his friend Pico della Mirandola, a few weeks before the deluge prophesied by Savonarola burst over Italy. Upon his tomb in S. Marco a burlesque epitaph was inscribed—

Politianus  
in hoc tumulto jacet  
Angelus unum  
qui caput et linguas  
res nova tres habuit.  
Obiit. an. MCCCCLXXXIV  
Sep. xxiv. Ætatis  
XL.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> 'Poliziano lies in this grave, the angel who had one head and, what is new, three tongues. He died September 24, 1494, aged 40.'

Bembo, who succeeded him in the dictatorship of Italian letters, composed a not unworthy elegy upon the man whom he justly apostrophised as 'Poliziano, master of the Ausonian lyre.'

The fortunes of Roman scholarship kept varying with the personal tastes of each successive Pope. Calixtus III. differed wholly from his predecessor, Nicholas V. Learned in theology and mediæval science, he was dead to the interests of humanistic literature. Vespasiano assures us that, when he entered the Vatican Library and saw its Greek and Latin authors in their red and silver bindings, instead of praising the munificence of Nicholas, he exclaimed, 'Vedi in che egli ha consumato la robba della Chiesa di Dio!'<sup>26</sup> Æneas Sylvius Piccolomini ranked high among the humanists. As an orator, courtier, state secretary, and man of letters, he shared the general qualities of the class to which he belonged. While a fellow-student of Beccadelli at Siena, he freely enjoyed the pleasures of youth, and thought it no harm to compose novels in the style of Longus and Achilles Tatius. These stories, together with his familiar letters, histories, cosmographical treatises, rhetorical disquisitions, apophthegms, and commentaries, written in a fluent and picturesque Latin style, distinguished him for wit and talent from the merely laborious students of his age.<sup>27</sup> A change, however, came over him when he assumed the title of Pius II. with the tiara.<sup>28</sup> Learning in Italy owed but little to his patronage, and though he strengthened the position of the humanists at Rome by founding the College of Abbreviators, he was more eager to defend Christendom against the Turk than to make his See the capital of culture. For this it would be narrow-minded to blame Pius. The experience of European politics had extended his view beyond the narrower circle of Italian interests; and there is something noble as well as piteous in his attempt to lead the forlorn hope of a cosmopolitan cause. Paul II. was chiefly famous for his persecution of the Roman Platonists;<sup>29</sup> and Sixtus IV., though he deserves to be remembered as the Pontiff who opened the Vatican Library to the public, plays no prominent part in the history of scholarship. Tiraboschi may be consulted for his refusal to pay the professors of the Roman Sapienza. Of Innocent VIII. nothing need be said; nor will any student of history expect to find it recorded that Alexander VI. wasted money on the patronage of learning. To the Borgia, indeed, the world owes that curse of Catholicism, that continued crime of high treason against truth and liberal culture, the subjection of the press to ecclesiastical control.

<sup>26</sup> 'Behold whereon he spent the substance of the Church of God!' Vespasiano adds that he gave away several hundred volumes to one of the cardinals, whose servants sold them for an old song. Vesp. p. 216. Assemani, the historian of the Vatican Library, on the contrary, asserts that Calixtus spent 40,000 ducats on books. It is not likely, however, that Vespasiano was wholly in error about a matter he understood so well, and had so much at heart.

<sup>27</sup> See the Basle edition of his collected works, 1571.

<sup>28</sup> See Vol. I., *Age of the Despots*, p. 192.

<sup>29</sup> Vol. I., *Age of the Despots*, pp. 194-195.

Under these Popes humanism had to flourish, as it best could, in the society of private individuals. Accordingly, we find the Roman scholars forming among themselves academies and learned circles. Of these the most eminent took its name from its founder, Julius Pomponius Lætus. He was a bastard of the princely House of the Sanseverini, to whom, when he became famous and they were anxious for his friendship, he penned the celebrated epistle: *'Pomponius Lætus cognatis et propinquis suis salutem. Quod petitis fieri non potest. Valet.'*<sup>30</sup> Pomponius derived his scholarship from Valla, and devoted all his energies to Latin literature, refusing, it is even said, to learn Greek, lest it should distract him from his favourite studies. He made it the object of his most serious endeavours not only to restore a knowledge of the ancients, but also to assimilate his life and manners to their standard. Men praised in him a second Cato for sobriety of conduct, frugal diet, and rural industry. He tilled his own ground after the methods of Varro and Columella, went a-fishing and a-fowling on holidays, and ate his sparing meal like a Roman Stoic beneath the spreading branches of an oak on the Campagna. The grand mansions of the prelates had no attractions for him. He preferred his own modest house upon the Esquiline, his garden on the Quirinal. It was here that his favourite scholars conversed with him at leisure; and to these retreats of the philosopher came strangers of importance, eager to behold a Roman living in all points like an antique sage. The high school of Rome owed much to his indefatigable industry. Through a long series of years he lectured upon the chief Latin authors, examining their texts with critical accuracy, and preparing new editions of their works. Before daybreak he would light his lantern, take his staff, and wend his way from the esquiline to the lecture-room, where, however, early the hour and however inclement the season, he was sure to find an overflowing audience. Yet it was not as a professor that Pomponius Lætus acquired his great celebrity, and left a lasting impress on the society of Rome. This he did by forming an academy for the avowed purpose of prosecuting the study of Latin antiquities and promoting the adoption of antique customs into modern life. The members assumed classical names, exchanging their Italian patronymics for fancy titles like Callimachus Experiens, Asclepiades, Glaucus, Volscus, and Petrejus. They yearly kept the birthday feast of Rome, celebrating the Palilia with Pagan solemnities, playing comedies of Plautus, and striving to revive the humours of the old Atellan farces. Of this circle Pontanus and Sannazzaro, Platina, Sabellicus and Molza, Janus Parrhasius, and the future Paul III. were proud to call themselves the members. It is only from the language in which such men refer to Lætus that we gain a due notion of his influence; for he left but little behind him as an author, and used himself to boast that, like Socrates and Christ, he hoped to be remembered through his pupils. In the year 1468 this

<sup>30</sup> 'P. L. to his kinsmen and relatives, greeting. What you ask cannot be. Farewell.'

Roman academy acquired fresh celebrity by the persecution of Paul II., who partly suspected a political object in its meetings, and partly resented the open heathenism of its leaders. I need not here repeat the tale of his crusade against the scholars. It is enough to mention that Lætus was imprisoned for a short while, and that in prison he wrote an apology for his life, defending himself against a charge of misplaced passion for a young Venetian pupil, and professing the sincerity of his belief in Christianity. After his release from the Castle of S. Angelo he was obliged to discontinue the meetings of his academy, which were not resumed until the reign of Sixtus. Pomponius Lætus lived on into the Papacy of Alexander, and died in 1498 at the age of seventy. His corpse was crowned with a laurel wreath in the Church of Araceli. Forty bishops, together with the foreign ambassadors in Rome and the representatives of the Borgia, who were specially deputed for that purpose, witnessed the ceremony and listened to the funeral oration. Lætus had desired that his body should be placed in a sarcophagus upon the Appian Way. This wish was not complied with. He was conveyed from Araceli to S. Salvatore in Lauro, and there buried like a Christian.

While the academy of Pomponius Lætus flourished at Rome, that of Naples was no less active under the presidency of Jovianus Pontanus. It appears to have originated in social gatherings assembled by Beccadelli, and to have held its meetings in a building called after its founder the *Porticus Antonianus*. When death had broken up the brilliant circle surrounding Alfonso the Magnanimous, Pontanus assumed the leadership of learned men in Naples, and gave the formality of a club to what had previously been a mere reunion of cultivated scholars. The members Latinised their names; many of them became better known by their assumed titles than by their Italian cognomens. Sannazzaro, for instance, acquired a wide celebrity as Accius Syncerus. Pontanus was himself a native of Cereto in the Spoletano. Born in 1426, he settled in his early manhood at Naples, where Beccadelli introduced him to his royal patrons. During the reigns of Ferdinand I., Alfonso II., and Ferdinand II. Pontanus held the post of secretary, tutor, and ambassador, accompanying his masters on their military expeditions and negotiating their affairs at the Papal Court. When Charles VIII. entered Naples as a conqueror, Pontanus greeted him with a panegyric oration, proving himself more courtly and self-seeking than loyal to the princes he had served so long. Guicciardini observes that this act of ingratitude stained the fair fame of Pontanus. Yet it may be pleaded in his defence that no moralist of the period had more boldly denounced the crimes and vices of Italian princes; and it is possible that Pontanus really hoped Charles might inaugurate a better age for Naples.

He was distinguished among the scholars of his time for the purity of his Latin style; to him belongs the merit of having written verse that might compete with good models of antiquity. His hexameters on stars and meteors, called 'Urania,' won the enthusiastic praise of his own generation, and subsequently served as model to Fracastoro for his

own didactic poem. His amatory elegiacs have an exuberance of colouring and sensuous force of phrase that seem peculiarly appropriate to the Bay of Naples, where they were inspired. As a prose-writer it is particularly by his moral treatises that Pontanus deserves to be remembered. Unlike the mass of contemporary dialogues on ethical subjects, they abound in illustrations drawn from recent history, so that even now they may be advantageously consulted by students anxious to gather characteristic details and to form a just opinion of Renaissance morality. Throughout his writings Pontanus shows himself to have been an original and vigorous thinker, a complete master of Latin scholarship, unwilling to abide contented with bare imitation, and bent upon expressing the facts of modern life, the actualities of personal emotion, in a style of accurate Latinity. When he died in 1503, he left at Naples one of the most flourishing schools of neo-pagan poets to be found in Italy; Lilius Gyraldus employs the old metaphor of the Trojan horse to describe the number and the vigour of the scholars who issued from it.

In the Church of Monte Oliveto at Naples there may be seen a group in terra cotta painted to imitate life. Alfonso II., Pontanus, and Sannazzaro are kneeling in adoration before the body of the dead Christ. Pontanus, who represents Nicodemus, is a stern, hard-featured, long-faced man, of powerful bone and fibrous sinews, built for serious labour in the study or the field. Sannazzaro, who stands for Joseph of Arimathea, is bald, fat-faced, with bushy eyebrows and a heavy cast of countenance. The physical characteristics of these men and their act of faith are in curious contradiction with the conception we form of them after reading the 'Elegies' and the 'Arcadia.'

The Roman Academy of Pomponius Lætus and the Neapolitan Academy of Pontanus continued to exist after the death of their founders, while similar institutions sprang up in every town of Italy. To speak of these in detail would be quite impossible. With the commencement of the sixteenth century they lost their classical character, and assumed fantastic Italian titles. Thus the Roman coterie of wits and scholars called itself *I Vignaiuoli*. The members, among whom were Berni, La Casa, Firenzuola, Mauro, Molza, assumed title like *L'Agreste*, *Il Mosto*, *Il Cotogno*, and so forth. The Cardinal Ippolito de' Medici founded a club in Rome for the study of Vitruvius. It met twice in the week and was known as *Le Virtù*. At Bologna the *Viridario* devoted its energies to the correction of printed texts; the *Sitibondi* studied law, the *Desti* cultivated extinct chivalry. Besides these, the one town of Bologna produced *Sonnacchiosi*, *Oziosi*, *Desiosi*, *Storditi*, *Confusi*, *Politici*, *Instabili*, *Gelati*, *Umorosi*. As the century advanced, academies multiplied in Italy, and their titles became more absurd. Ravenna had its *Informi*, Faenza its *Smarriti*, Macerata its *Catenati*, Fabriano its *Disuniti*, Perugia its *Insensati*, Urbino its *Assorditi*, Naples its *Sereni*, *Ardenti*, and *Incogniti*—and so on *ad infinitum*. At Florence the Platonic Academy continued to flourish under the auspices of the Rucellai family, in whose gardens assembled the company described

by Filippo de' Nerli,<sup>31</sup> until the year 1522, when it was suppressed on the occasion of the conspiracy against Giulio de' Medici. Duke Cosimo revived it under the name of the Florentine Academy in 1540, when its labours were wholly devoted to Petrarch and the Italian language. In 1572 appeared the famous academy called *Della Crusca*, the only one among these later societies which acquired an European reputation.

Those who are curious to follow the history of the academies, may be referred to the comprehensive notices of Tiraboschi. From the date of their Italianisation they cease to belong to the history of humanism; what justifies the mention of them here is the fact that they owed their first existence to the scholars of the third period. The worst faults of Italian erudition—pedantry and stylistic affectations—were perpetuated by coteries worshipping Petrarch and peddling with the idlest of all literary problems, where so great a writer as Annibale Caro thought it in good taste to write a dissertation on the nose of a president, and where the industry of sensible men was absorbed in the concoction of sonnets by the myriad and childish puns on their own titles. During the following age of political stagnation and ecclesiastical oppression the academies were the playthings of a nation fast degenerating into intellectual hebetude. Not without amazement do we read the eulogies pronounced by Milton on the 'learned and affable meeting of frequent academies, and the procurement of wise and artful recitations, sweetened with eloquent and graceful incitements to the love and practice of justice, temperance, and fortitude.' What he had observed with admiration in Italy, he would fain have seen imitated in England, undeterred apparently by the impotence and sterility of academic dissertations<sup>32</sup>

It remains to speak of the establishment of printing in Italy, an event no less important for the preservation and diffusion of classical learning than the previous discovery of MSS. had been indispensable for its revival. What has to be said about the erudite society of Venice may appropriately be introduced in this connection; while the final honours of the third period will be seen to belong of right to one of Italy's most noble-minded scholars, Aldus Manutius.

In 1462 Adolph of Nassau pillaged Maintz and dispersed its printers over Europe. Three years later two Germans, by name Sweynheim and Pannartz, who had worked under Fust, set up a press in Subbiaco, a little village of the Sabine mountains. Here, in October 1465, the first edition of Lactantius saw the light. The German printers soon afterwards removed from Subbiaco, and settled, under the protection of the Massimi, in Rome, where they continued to issue Latin authors from their press.<sup>33</sup> In 1466 John of Spires established himself at Venice.

<sup>31</sup> See Vol. I., *Age of the Despots*, p. 141, note.

<sup>32</sup> See the *Reason of Church Government urged against Prelaty*, and the *Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth*.

<sup>33</sup> From a memorial presented by these printers to Sixtus IV. in 1472 we ascertain some facts about their industry. They had at that date printed in all 12,495 volumes.

He was soon afterwards joined by his brother Vindelino (so the Italians write the name) and by Nicholas Jenson, the Frenchman. Florence had no press till 1471, when Bernardo Cennini printed the commentary of Servius on Virgil's 'Bucolics.' The 'Georgics' and 'Æneid' appeared in the following year. To Cennini, however, belongs the honour of having been the first Italian to cast his own type. Like many other illustrious artificers, he was by trade a goldsmith; in his address to the reader he styles himself *aurifex omnium iudicio præstantissimus*, adding, with reference to the typography, *expressis ante calide caracteribus ac deinde fusis literis volumen hoc primum impresserunt*. The last sentence of the address should also be quoted: *Florentinis ingeniis nil ardui est*. Other printers opened workshops in Florence within the course of a few years—John of Maintz in 1472, Nicholas of Breslau in 1477, Antonio Miscomini in 1481, and Lorenzo Alopa of Venice, who gave Homer with Greek type to the world in 1488. Still, Florence had been anticipated by many other cities; for when once the new art took root in Italy, it spread like wild fire. Omitting smaller places from the calculation, it has been reckoned that, before the year 1500, 4,987 books were printed in Italy, of which 298 are claimed by Bologna, 300 by Florence, 629 by Milan, 929 by Rome, and 2,835 by Venice. The disproportion between the activity of Florence and of Venice in the book trade deserves to be noticed, though how it should be explained I hardly know. Fifty towns and numbers of insignificant burghs—Pinerolo, Savona, Pieve di Sacco, Cividale, Soncino, Chivasso, Scandiano, for example—could boast of local presses. Ambulant printers established their machinery for half a year or so in a remote village, printed what came to hand there, and moved on.

While scholars rejoiced in the art that, to quote the words of one of them, 'had saved the labour of their aching joints,' the copyists complained that their occupation would be taken from them. The whistle of the locomotive at the beginning of this century was not more afflicting to stage-coachmen than the creaking of the wooden printing press to those poor scribes. Yet, however quickly a labour-saving invention may spread, there is generally time for the superseded industry to die an easy death, and for artisans to find employment in the new trade. Vespasiano, who during twenty-six years survived the first book printed in Florence, could even afford to despise the press.<sup>34</sup> The great nobles, on whose patronage he depended, did not suddenly transfer their custom from the scribe to the compositor; nor was it to be expected that so essentially a democratic art as printing should find immediate favour with the aristocracy. A prince with a library of MSS. worth 40,000 ducats hated the machine that put an equal number of more readable volumes within the reach of moderate competency. Moreover, a cer-

It was their custom to issue 265 copies in each edition; the double of that number for Virgil, Cicero's separate works, and theological books in request. Cantù, *Lett. It.* p. 112. See Cantù, p. 110, for details of the earliest Latin books.

<sup>34</sup> See above, p. 468.



tain suspicion of subversiveness and license clung about the press. This was to some extent justified by fact, since the press was destined to be the most formidable engine of the modern reason. Ecclesiastics, again, questioned whether the promiscuous multiplication of books were pious; and Alexander VI stretched his hand out to coerce the printer's devil. To check the spread of printing would, however, have overtaxed the powers of any human tyranny. All that the Church could do was to place its productions under episcopal control.

Though the copyists of MSS. were thrown out of work by the printing press, it gave important stimulus to other industries in Italy. The paper mills of Fabriano and of Colle in the Val d' Elsa became valuable properties;<sup>35</sup> compositors and readers began to form a separate class of artisans, while needy scholars found a market for their talents in the houses of the publishers. When we consider the amount of literary work that had to be performed before Greek, Latin, and Hebrew texts could be prepared for the press, the difficulty of procuring correct copies of authoritative codices, and the scrupulous attention expended upon proof sheets, we are able to understand that men who lived by learning found the new art profitable.

Instead of having previous editions to work upon, the publishers were obliged, in the first instance, to collect MSS. For this purpose they either travelled themselves from city to city, or employed competent amanuenses. Next, it was necessary to study the philosophers, poets, historians, mathematicians, and mystics, whose works they intended to print, in order that no mistake in the sense of the words should be made. Orthography and punctuation had to be fixed; and between many readings only one could be adopted. Giving a first edition to the world involved far more anxiety on these points than the reproduction of a book already often printed. No one man could accomplish such tasks alone. Therefore we find that scores of learned men were associated together for the purpose, living under the same roof, revising the copy for the compositor, overlooking the men at work, reading the text aloud, and correcting the proofs with a vigilance that is but little needed nowadays. All this labour, moreover, was accomplished without the aid of grammars, lexicons, and other aids. Truly we may say without exaggeration that the Aldi of Venice and the Stephani of Paris are more worthy of commemoration for services rendered through scholarship to humanity than those modern castigators of ancient texts, the Porsons and the Lachmanns, whose names are on every lip. The enthusiasm of discovery, and the rich field for original industry offered to those early editors, may be reckoned as compensation for their otherwise overwhelming toil.

<sup>35</sup> It is supposed that the earliest paper factory established in Italy was at Fabriano. Colle, a little town near Volterra, made paper from a remote period; by a deed, dated March 6, 1377, now preserved in the Florentine Archivio Diplomatico, one Colo da Colle rented a fall of water there *et gualcheriam ad faciendas cartas* for twenty years. Both places are still celebrated for their paper mills.

Teobaldo Mannucci, better known as Aldo Manuzio, was born in 1450 at Sermoneta, near Velletri. After residing as a client in the princely house of Carpi, he added the name Pio to his patronymic, and signed his publications with the full description, *Aldus Pius Manutius Romanus et Philhellen*, "Ἀλδος ὁ Μανούτιος Ῥωμαῖός καὶ Φιλέλλην." He studied Latin at Rome under Gasparino da Verona, and Greek at Ferrara under Guarino da Verona, to whom he dedicated his Theocritus in 1495. Having qualified himself for undertaking the work of tutor or professor, according to the custom of the century, and having made friends with many of the principal Italian scholars, he went in 1482 to reside at Mirandola with his old friend and fellow-student, Giovanni Pico. There he stayed two years, enjoying the society of the Phœnix of his age, and continuing his Greek studies in concert with Emmanuel Adramyttenos, a learned Cretan. Before Pico removed to Florence he procured for Aldo the post of tutor to his nephews Alberto and Lionello Pio. Carpi had owned the family of Pio for its masters since the thirteenth century, when they rose to power, like many of the Lombard nobles, by adroit use of Imperial privileges.<sup>36</sup> This little city, placed midway between Correggio, Mirandola, and Modena, is so insignificant that its name has been omitted from the index in Murray's handbook; nor is there indeed much but the memory of Aldo and Alberto Pio, and a church built by Baldassare Peruzzi, to recommend it to the notice of a traveller. Under the tuition of Aldo the two young princes became excellent scholars. Alberto in particular proved, by his aptitude for philosophical studies, that he had inherited from his mother, the sister of Giovanni Pico, something of the spirit of Mirandola. When Aldo published his great edition of Aristotle, he inscribed it to his former pupil with a Greek dedication, in which he styled him τῷ τῶν ὄντων ἐραστῇ. There can be no doubt that Alberto's knowledge of Greek language and philosophy was far more thorough than that of many more belauded princes of the age. Yet he had but little opportunity for the quiet prosecution of classical studies, or for the patronage of learned men at Carpi. Driven from his patrimony by the Imperialists, he died at Paris in 1530, after a life spent in foreign service and diplomatic offices of trust. The bronze monument for his tomb may still be seen<sup>37</sup> in the Gallery of the Louvre. The princely scholar, clad in rich Renaissance armour, is reclining with his head supported by his right hand; the left holds an open book. The attitude of melancholy meditation, the ornamental but useless cuirass, and the volume open while the scabbard of the sword is shut, add to the portrait of this prince in exile the value of an allegory. Such symbols suited the genius of Italy during the age of foreign invaders.

To Alberto Pio the world owes a debt of gratitude, inasmuch as he supplied Aldo with the funds necessary for starting his printing press,

<sup>36</sup> Sansovino, in his *Famiglie Illustri*, after giving a fabulous pedigree of the Pio family, dates their signorial importance from the reign of Frederick II.

<sup>37</sup> Executed for the Church of the Cordeliers by Paulus Pontius.

and gave him lands at Carpi, where his family were educated. When Aldo conceived the ambitious project of printing the whole literature of Greece, four Italian towns could already claim the honours of Greek publications. Milan takes the lead. In 1476 the Grammar of Lascaris was printed there by Dionysius Paravisini, with the aid of Demetrius of Crete.<sup>38</sup> In 1480 Esop and Theocritus appeared, with no publisher's name. In 1486 two Cretans, Alexander and Laoniceus, edited a Greek psalter. In 1493 Isocrates, prepared by Demetrius Chalcondylas, was issued by Henry the German and Sebastian of Pontremolo. Next comes Venice, where, as early as 1484, the 'Erotemata' of Chrysoloras had been produced by a certain Peregrinus Bononiensis. Vicenza followed in 1488 with a reprint of Lascaris's Grammar due to Leonard Achates of Basle, and in 1490 with a reprint of the 'Erotemata.' Florence, as we have already seen, gave Homer to the world in 1488. Demetrius Chalcondylas revised the text; Demetrius the Cretan supplied the models for the types; Alopa of Venice was the publisher. It will be remarked that, with the exception of Homer and Theocritus, no true classic of the first magnitude had appeared before the foundation of the Aldine Press. I may also add that the Milanese Isocrates was really contemporaneous with the Musæus, Galeomyomachia, and Psalter issued by Aldo as precursors of his Greek library—Πρόδρομοι τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς βιβλιοθήκης. This fact makes his thirty-three first editions of all the greatest and most voluminous Greek authors between 1494 and 1515 all the more remarkable.

It was at Carpi in 1490 that Aldo finally matured his project of establishing a Greek press. His patrons desired him to found it in their castle of Novi; but Aldo judged rightly that at Venice he would be more secure from the disturbances of warfare, as well as more conveniently situated for engaging the assistance of Greek scholars and compositors. Accordingly, he took a house, and settled near S. Agostino. This house speedily became a Greek colony. It may be inferred from Aldo's directions to the printers that his trade was carried on almost entirely by Greeks, and that Greek was the language of his household. The instructions to the binders as to the order of the sheets and mode of stitching were given in Greek; and many curious Greek phrases appear to have sprung up to meet the exigencies of the new industry. Thus we find *ἵνα ἑλληνιστὶ συνδεθῇσεται* for 'Greek stitching,' and *χαττιτερίνη χροὶ* for 'the type;' while Aldo himself is described as *ἐφευρέτη τούτων γραμμάτων χαρακτῆρος ὡς εἴρηται*. The prefaces,

<sup>38</sup> Poliziano's epigram addressed to these earliest Greek printers may be quoted here:

Qui colis Aonidas, Grajos quoque volve libellos;  
 Namque illas genuit Græcia, non Latium.  
 En Paravisinus quantâ hos Dionysius arte  
 Imprimat, en quanto cernitis ingenio!  
 Te quoque, Demetri, ponto circumsona Crete  
 Tanti operis nobis edidit artificem.  
 Turce, quid insultas? tu Græca volumina perdis;  
 Hi pariunt: hydræ nunc age colla secal!

almost always composed in Greek, prove that this language was read currently in Italy, since Aldo relied on numerous purchasers of his large and costly issues. The Greek type, for the casting of which he provided machinery in his own house, was formed upon the model supplied by Marcus Musurus, a Cretan, who had taken Latin orders and settled at Carpi, and from whom Aldo received important assistance in the preparation of editions for the press. The compositors, in like manner, were mostly Cretans. We hear of one of them, by name Aristoboulos Apostolios, while John Gregoropoulos, another Cretan, the brother-in-law of Musurus, performed the part of reader. The ink used by Aldo was made in his own house, where he had, besides, a subordinate establishment for binding. The paper, excelled by none that has been since produced, came from the mills of Fabriano. It may easily be imagined that this beehive of Greek industry often numbered over thirty persons, not including the craftsmen employed in lesser offices by the day.

The superintendence of this large establishment, added to the anxieties attending the production of so many books as yet not edited, sorely taxed the health and powers of Aldo. For years together he seems to have had no minute he could call his own. Continual demands were made by visitors and strangers upon his hours of leisure; and in order to secure time for the conduct of his business, he was forced to placard his door with a prohibitory notice.<sup>39</sup> Besides the more ordinary interruptions, to which every man of eminence is subjected, he had to struggle with peculiar difficulties due to the novelty of his undertaking. The prefaces to many of his publications contain allusions to strikes among his workmen,<sup>40</sup> to the piracies of rival booksellers,<sup>41</sup> to the difficulty of procuring authentic MSS.<sup>42</sup> and to the interruptions caused by war. Twice was the work of printing suspended, first in 1506, and then again in 1510. For two whole years at the latter period the industries of Venice were paralysed by the allied forces of the League of Cambray. The dedication of the first edition of Plato, 1513, to Leo X. concludes with a prayer, splendid in the earnestness and simplicity of its eloquence, wherein Aldo compares the miseries of warfare and the woes of Italy with the sublime and peaceful objects of the student. All the terrible experiences of that wasteful campaign, from the effects of which

<sup>39</sup> See Didot's *Alde Manuce*, p. 417, the passage beginning 'Vix credas.' In the Latin preface to the *Thesaurus Cornucopiæ et Horti Adonidas*, 1495, Aldo complains that he has not been able to rest for one hour during seven years.

<sup>40</sup> 'Tot illico oborta sunt impedimenta malorumque invidiâ et domesticorum καὶ τῶν καταράτων καὶ δραπετεύοντων δούλων ἐπιβουλῆς.' Preface to the *Poetæ Christiani Veteres*, 1501. Again in the 'monitum' of the same, 'quater jam in ædibus nostris ab operariis et stipendiariis in me conspiratum et duce malorum omnium matre avaritiâ quos Deo adjuvante sic fregi ut valde omnes poeniteat suæ perfidiæ.'

<sup>41</sup> The French publishers of Lyons, the Giunti of Rome, and Soncino of Fano, were particularly troublesome. Didot has extracted some curious information about their tricks as well as Aldo's exposure of them. Pp. 167, 482-486.

<sup>42</sup> See especially the preface to Aristotle, vol. i. 1495; vol. v. 1498.

the Republic of Venice never wholly recovered, seem to find expression in the passionate but reverent, address of the great printer to the scholar Pope. For two years previously the press of Aldo had been idle, while the French were deluging Brescia with blood, and the plains of Ravenna were heaped with dead Italians, Spaniards, Gauls, and Germans, met in passionate but fruitless conflict by the Ronco. Now, from the midst of her desolated palaces and silenced lagoons, Venice stretched forth to Europe the peace-gift of Plato. The student who had toiled to make it perfect, appealed before Christ and His vicar, from the arms that brutalise to the arts that humanise the nations.

In the midst of these occupations, disappointments, and distractions, Aldo, sustained by the enthusiasm of his great undertaking, never flagged. Some of his prefaces, after setting forth the impediments he had to combat, burst into a cry of triumph. What joy, he exclaims, it is to see these volumes of the ancients rescued from book-buriers (*βιβλιοτάφροι*) and given freely to the world!<sup>43</sup> No man could have been more generously anxious than he was to serve the cause of scholarship by the widest possible diffusion of books at a moderate price. No artist was ever more scrupulously bent on giving the best possible form, the utmost accuracy, to every detail of his work. When we consider the beauty of the Aldine volumes, and the critical excellence of their texts, we may fairly be astonished at their prices. The Musæus was sold for something under one shilling of our money, the Theocritus for something under two shillings. The five volumes which contained the whole of Aristotle, might be purchased for a sum not certainly exceeding 8*l*. Each volume of the pocket series, headed in 1501 by the 8vo. Virgil, and comprising Greek, Latin, and Italian authors, fetched about two shillings. For this library the celebrated Italic type, known as Aldine, was adapted from the handwriting of Petrarch, and cut by Francesco da Bologna.<sup>44</sup> It appears that, as his trade increased, Aldo formed a company, who shared the risks and profits of the business.<sup>45</sup> Yet the expenses of publishing were so heavy, the insecurity of the book market so great, and the privileges of copyright granted by the Pope or the Venetian Senate so imperfect,<sup>46</sup> that Aldo, after giving his life to this work, and bequeathing to the world Greek literature, died comparatively poor. Erasmus, always somewhat snarling, accused him of avarice; yet it was his liberality to his collaborators, his openhanded-

<sup>43</sup> See Preface to *Thesaurus Cornucopiae*, quoted by Didot, p. 80; and cf. pp. 210, 221, 521, for further hints about selfish bibliomaniacs, who tried to hoard their treasures from the public and refused them to the press. Aldo, as a genuine lover of free learning, and also as a publisher, detests this class of men.

<sup>44</sup> See Pannizzi's tract on 'Francesco da Bologna,' published by Pickering, 1873. He was probably Francia the painter.

<sup>45</sup> In a letter to Marcello Virgilia Adriani, the teacher of Machiavelli, he mentions some books 'Cum aliis quibusdam communes,' as distinguished from others which were his private property. Didot, p. 233.

<sup>46</sup> On the subject of patents, privileges, and monopolies see Didot, pp. 79, 166, 189, 371, 479-481.

ness in buying the expensive apparatus for critical editions, that forced him to be economical.

The first editions of Greek books published by Aldo deserve to be separately noticed. In 1493, or earlier, appeared the 'Hero and Leander' of Musæus, a poem that passed, in that uncritical age, for the work of Homer's mythical predecessor.<sup>47</sup> In 1495 the first volume of Aristotle saw the light, accompanied by numerous Greek epigrams and a Greek letter of Scipione Fortiguerra, who deplores in it the deaths of Pico, Poliziano, and Ermolao Barbaro. The remaining four volumes followed in 1497 and 1498. In the latter of these years Aldo, aided by his friend Musurus, produced nine comedies of Aristophanes; the MSS. of the 'Lysistrata' and 'Thesmophoriazusæ' were afterwards discovered at Urbino, and published by Giunta in 1515. In 1502, Thucydides, Sophocles, and Herodotus appeared, followed in 1503 by Xenophon's 'Hellenics' and Euripides,<sup>48</sup> and in 1504 by Demosthenes. After this occurs a lull, occasioned in part by the disturbances ensuing on the League of Blois. In 1508 the list is recontinued with the Greek orators; while 1509 has to show the minor works of Plutarch. Then follows another stoppage due to war. In 1513 Plato was published, and in 1514 Pindar, Hesychius, and Athenæus.

From the preceding account I have omitted the notice of minor editions as well as reprints. In order to complete the history of the Aldine issue of Greek books, it should be mentioned that Aldo's successors continued his work by giving Pausanias, Strabo, Æschylus, Galen, Hippocrates, and Longinus to the world; so that when the Estiennes of Paris came to glean in the field of the Italian publishers, they only found Anacreon, Maximus Tyrius, and Diodorus Siculus as yet unedited.

We must not forget that, while the Greek authors were being printed thus assiduously by Aldo, he continued to send forth Latin and Italian publications from his press. Thus we find that the 'Etna' and the 'Asolani' of Bembo, the collected writings of Poliziano, the 'Hypnerotomachia Poliphili,' the 'Divine Comedy,' the 'Cose Volgari' of Petrarch, the 'Poetæ Christiani Veteres,' including Prudentius, the poems of Pontanus, the letters of the younger Pliny, the 'Arcadia' of Sannazzaro, Quintilian, Valerius Maximus, and the 'Adagia' of Erasmus were printed, either in first editions or with a beauty of type and paper never reached before, between the years 1495 and 1514.

The great Dutch scholar who made an epoch in the history of learning, and transferred the sovereignty of letters to the north of Europe, paid a visit in 1508 to the house of Aldo, where he personally super-

<sup>47</sup> Μουσαῖον τὸν παλαιότατον ποιητὴν ἠθέλησα προοιμιάζειν τῷ τε Ἀριστοτέλει καὶ τῶν σοφῶν τοῖς ἑτέροις αὐτίκα δι' ἐμοῦ ἐντυπησόμενοις. This πρόδρομος, or precursor, appeared without a date; but it must have come out earlier than 1494.

<sup>48</sup> John Lascaris had edited four plays of Euripides for Alopa in 1496. This Aldine edition contained eighteen, one of which, the *Hercules Furens*, turned up while vol. ii. was in the press. The *Electra*, not discovered till later on, was printed at Rome, 1545.

intended the re-impression of his 'Proverbs.'<sup>49</sup> We have a lively picture of the printing of this celebrated book in Aldo's workshop. 'Together we attacked the work,' says Erasmus, 'I writing, while Aldo gave my copy to the press.' In one corner of the room sat the scholar at his desk, with the thin keen face so well portrayed by Holbein, improvising new paragraphs, and making additions to his previous collections in the brilliant Latin style that no one else could write. Aldo took the MS. from his hand, and passed it on to the compositors, revising the proofs as they came fresh from the press, or conferring with his reader Seraphinus.<sup>50</sup> Erasmus had already gained the reputation of a dangerous freethinker and opponent to the Church. As years advanced, and the Reformation spread in Northern Europe, he became more and more odious to ecclesiastical authority. The spirit of revolt was incarnate in this Voltaire of the sixteenth century, nor could the clergy raise other arms than those of persecution against so radiant a champion of pure reason. All reprints of the 'Adagia' were therefore forbidden by the bishops. Paulus Manutius had to quote it on his catalogues as the work of *Batavus quidam homo*. To such an extent were liberal studies now gagged and downtrodden by the tyrants of the Counter-Reformation in that Italy which for two previous centuries had been the champion of free culture for Europe.

Before concluding the biography of Aldo Manuzio it may be well to give some account of the more illustrious assistants and collaborators whom he gathered around him in his academy at Venice.<sup>51</sup> The New Academy, or Aldine Academy of Hellenists, was founded in 1500 for the special purpose of promoting Greek studies and furthering the publication of Greek authors. Its rules were written in Greek; the members were obliged to speak Greek; their official titles were Greek; and their names were Grecised. Thus Scipione Fortiguerra of Pistoja, who prepared the text of Demosthenes for Aldo, styled himself *Carteromachos*; and Alessandro Bondini, the Venetian physician who worked upon the edition of Aristotle, bore the name of *Agathemerus*.<sup>52</sup> The most distinguished Greeks at that time resident in Italy could be counted among the Neacademicians. John Lascaris, of Imperial blood, the teacher of Hellenism in France under three kings, was an honorary member. To this great scholar Aldo dedicated his first edition of Sophocles. Marcus Musurus occupied a post of more practical importance.<sup>53</sup> We have seen that his handwriting formed the model of Aldo's

<sup>49</sup> The *Adagia* were first printed in 1500 at Paris by John Philippi. After the Aldine edition eleven were issued between 1509 and 1520 by Matthew Schürer, ten by Froben between 1513 and 1539, while seven or eight others appeared in various parts of Germany.

<sup>50</sup> See the passage quoted by Didot, pp. 297-299.

<sup>51</sup> Didot, pp. 147-151, 436-470, gives ample details concerning the foundation, constitution, and members of the Aldine Academy.

<sup>52</sup> We may compare the name of Melanchthon.

<sup>53</sup> A native of Rotino, in Crete (b. 1470, d. at Rome 1517). He acquired Latin so thoroughly that Erasmus wrote of him: 'Latinae linguae usque ad miraculum doctus, quod vix ulli Græco contigit præter Theodorum Gazam et Joannem Lascarem.' John Lascaris was his master.



Greek type. To his scholarship the editions of Aristophanes, Plato, Pindar, Hesychius, Athenæus, and Pausanias owed their critical accuracy; while, in concert with Nicolaos Blastos and Zacharias Calliergi, two Cretan printers settled in Venice, he published the first Latin and Greek lexicon.<sup>54</sup> It will be observed that the Cretans play a prominent part in this Venetian revival of Greek learning. Aristoboulos Apostolios, Joannes Gregoropoulos, Joannes Rhosos, and Demetrius Doucas, all of them natives of Crete, were members of the Neacademy. The first as a compositor, the second as a reader, the third as a scribe, the fourth as editor of the Greek Orators, rendered Aldo effective assistance. Among Italians, Pietro Bembo, Aleander, and Alberto Pio occupied positions of honorary distinction rather than of active industry. Those who worked in earnest for the Aldine press were chiefly Venetians. Girolamo Avanzi, professor of philosophy at Padua, revised the texts of Catullus, Seneca, and Ausonius. Andrea Navagero, the noble Venetian poet, corrected Lucretius, Ovid, Terence, Quintilian, Horace, and Virgil. Giambattista Egnazio performed the same service for Valerius Maximus the Letters of Pliny, Lactantius, Tertullian, Aulus Gellius, and other Latin authors. To mention all the eminent Venetians who played their part in this Academy would be tedious; yet the two names of Marino Sanudo, the famous diarist, and of Marco Antonio Coccio, called Sabellicus, the historian of the Republic, cannot be omitted. Of northern foreigners the most illustrious was Erasmus; to Englishmen the most interesting is Thomas Linacre. Born in 1460 at Canterbury, he travelled into Italy, and studied at Florence under Poliziano and Chalcondylas. On his return to England he founded the Greek Chair at Oxford, and died in London in the year 1524. His translation into Latin of the 'Sphere' of Proclus was published by Aldus in 1499. To him and to Grocin belongs the credit of having sought to plant the culture of Italy in the universities of England.

During a severe illness in the year 1498 Aldo vowed to take holy orders if he should recover. From this obligation he subsequently obtained release by a brief of Alexander VI., and in the following year he married Maria, daughter of Andrea Torresano, of Asola. Andrea, some years earlier, had bought the press established by Nicholas Jenson in Venice, so that Aldo's marriage to his daughter combined the interests of two important firms. Henceforth the names of Aldus and of Solanus were associated on the title-pages of the Aldine publications. When Aldo died in 1514 (1515 new style), he left three sons—Manutio, in orders at Asola; Antonio, a bookseller at Bologna,<sup>55</sup> and Paolo Manuzio. The last of these sons, born at Venice in 1512, was educated by his grandfather Andrea till the year of the old man's death (1529). He

<sup>54</sup> *Etymologicon Magnum*, 1499. Didot, pp. 544-578, may be consulted for information about this Greek press. Musurus boasts in his encomiastic verses that the work was accomplished entirely by Cretans. ἀναλώμασι βλαστοῦ πόνῳ καὶ δεξιότητι Καλλιέργου in the colophon.

<sup>55</sup> There is some discrepancy about this Antonio between Renouard and Didot.

carried on the press at Venice and at Rome, separating in the year 1540 from his uncles the Asolani, and bequeathing his business to his son named Aldo. This grandson of Aldo Manuzio, called by Scaliger a 'wretched and slow wit, the mimic of his father,' began his career by printing, at the age of eleven, a treatise on the 'Eleganze della Lingua Toscana e Latina.' He married Francesca Lucrezia Giunta, of the famous house of printers, and died, without surviving issue, at Rome in 1597. Thus the industry of Aldo was continued through two generations till the close of the sixteenth century. The device of the dolphin and the anchor, intended to symbolise quickness of execution combined with firmness of deliberation, and the motto *Festina lente*, which Sir Thomas Browne has rendered by 'Celerity contempered with cunctation,' though changed to suit varieties of taste from time to time, were never altogether abandoned by the Aldines.<sup>56</sup> As years went on, however, their publications became of less importance, and the beauty of their books degenerated.

In tracing the history of Aldo's enterprise, I have been carried beyond the limits of the period included in this chapter. Yet I knew not how to describe the activity of the press in Italy better than by concentrating attention upon the greatest publisher who ever lived. Aldo Manuzio was no mere bookseller or printer. His learning won the hearty praises of ripe scholars, nor did any student of the age express more nobly and with fuller conviction his deep sense of the dignity conferred by learning on the soul of man.<sup>57</sup> That he was amiable in private life is proved by the intimate relations he maintained with humanists, than whom even poets are not a more irritable race of men.<sup>58</sup> To his fellow-workers he was uniformly generous in pecuniary matters, free from jealousy, and prodigal of praise. Seeking even less than his due share of credit, he desired that the great work of his life should pass for the common achievement of himself and his learned associates. Therefore he called his Greek library the fruits of the Neacademia, though no man could have known better than he did that his own genius was the life and spirit of the undertaking. His stores of MSS. were as open to the instruction of scholars as his printed books were given liberally to the public.<sup>59</sup> 'Aldo,' writes Erasmus, 'had nothing in his treasury but what

<sup>56</sup> 'Sum ipse mihi optimus testis me semper habere comites, ut oportere aiunt, delphinum et anchoram; nam et dedimus multa cunctando, et damus assidue.' Preface to the *Astronomici*, dedicated to Duke Guidobaldo of Urbino, 1499. The observations of Erasmus on the motto deserve to be read with attention. See Didot, p. 299.

<sup>57</sup> See the passages from his letters and prefaces quoted and referred to on p. 480, above, note 7.

<sup>58</sup> The prospect of his visit to Milan in 1509 called forth these pretty April verses from Antiquari:—

Aldus venit en, Aldus ecce venit!  
Nunc, O nunc, juvenes, ubique in urbe  
Flores spargite. Vere namque primo  
Aldus venit en, Aldus ecce venit.

<sup>59</sup> See above, p. 503, for his hatred of the βιβλιοτάφοι. He was the very opposite of Henri Estienne the younger, who closed his library against his son-in-law Casaubon.

he readily communicated.' Those who read the estimate of his services to learning made by eminent contemporaries, will find the language of Nicholas Leonicens, Erasmus, and Anton Francesco Doni not exaggerated.<sup>60</sup> But, in order to comprehend their true value, we must bear in mind that until the year 1516, when Froben printed the Greek Testament at Basle, none but insignificant Greek reprints had appeared in Northern Europe.<sup>61</sup> Finally, what makes the place of Aldus in the history of Italian humanism all-important is the fact that, after about 1520, Greek studies began to decline in Italy all together. As though exhausted by the enormous energy wherewith Florence had acquired and Venice had disseminated Greek culture, the Italians relapsed into apathy. Posterity may be thankful that their pupils, Grocin and Lina-cre, Reuchlin and Erasmus, the Stephani and Budæus, had by this time transplanted erudition beyond the Alps, while Aldo had secured the literature of ancient Greece against the possibility of destruction.

<sup>60</sup> Didot, pp. 89, 299, 423.

<sup>61</sup> *Priscian*, at Erfurt, 1501; *Alphabet, Batrachomyomachia*, Musæus, Theocritus, Grammar of Chrysoloras, Hesiod's *Works and Days*, Paris, 1507; Aristotle on *Divination by Dreams*, Cracow, 1529; Lucian, *περὶ διψάδων*, Oxford, 1521, are among the earliest Greek books printed out of Italy. The grammars of the Greek humanists were frequently reprinted in the first quarter of the sixteenth century in Germany.

## CHAPTER VII

### FOURTH PERIOD OF HUMANISM

*Fall of the Humanists—Scholarship permeates Society—A New Ideal of Life and Manners—Latinisation of Names—Classical Periphrases—Latin Epics on Christian Themes—Paganism—The Court of Leo X.—Honours of the Church given to Scholars—Ecclesiastical Men of the World—Mæcenases at Rome—Papal and Imperial Rome—Moral Corruption—Social Refinement—The Roman Academy—Pietro Bembo—His Life at Ferrara—At Urbino—Comes to Rome—Employed by Leo—Retirement to Padua—His Dictatorship of Letters—Jacopo Sadoletto—A Graver Genius than Bembo—Paulus Jovius—Latin Stylist—His Histories—Baldassare Castiglione—Life at Urbino and Rome—The Courtly Scholar—His Diplomatic Missions—Alberto Pio—Gian Francesco Pico della Mirandola—The Vicissitudes of his Life—Jerome Aleander—Oriental Studies—The Library of the Vatican—His Mission to Germany—Inghirami, Beroaldo, and Acciaiuoli—The Roman University—John Lascaris—Study of Antiquities—Origin of the 'Corpus Inscriptionum'—Topographical Studies—Formation of the Vatican Sculpture Gallery—Discovery of the Laocoon—Feeling for Statues in Renaissance Italy—Venetian Envoys in the Belvedere—Raphael's Plan for excavating Ancient Rome—His Letter to Leo—Effect of Antiquarian Researches on the Arts—Intellectual Supremacy of Rome in this Period—The Fall—Adrian VI.—The Sack of Rome—Valeriano's Description of the Sufferings of Scholars.*

WHAT is known as the Revival of Learning was accomplished before the close of the fifteenth century, and about this time humanism began to lose credit. The professional scholars who had domineered in Italy during the last hundred years, were now regarded with suspicion as pretentious sophists, or as empty-pated pedants. Their place was taken by men of the world, refined courtiers, and polite stylists who piqued themselves on general culture. This revolution in public opinion was the result of various causes which I shall attempt to set forth in another chapter. It is enough for my present purpose to observe that the learning possessed at first by a few teachers, acquired with effort, and communicated with condescension, had now become the common property of cultivated men. In proportion as a knowledge of the classic authors diffused itself over a wider area, the mere reputation of sound scholarship ceased to form a valid title to celebrity. It was necessary that the man of letters, educated by antiquity, should give proof of his genius by some originality of mind. The age of acquisition had ended; the age of application had begun. To this result the revived interest in Italian literature powerfully contributed. Writers were no longer, like Bruni and Poggio, ashamed of their *cose volgari*. On the contrary, the most splendid productions of the first half of the sixteenth century, the

Histories of Guicciardini and Machiavelli, the Epic of Ariosto, the 'Cortegiano' of Castiglione, and the burlesque poems of Berni were penned in powerful and delicate Italian. To what extent the influence of Lorenzo de' Medici, who was always more partial to vernacular literature than to scholarship, determined the change in question, is a matter for opinion. That Florence led the way by her great writers of Italian poetry and prose admits of no doubt.

At the same time the erudition of the fifteenth century had steeped the whole Italian nation. Humanism penetrated every sphere of intellectual activity, and gave a colour to all social customs. The arts of painting and of sculpture felt its influence. A new style of architecture, formed upon the model of Roman monuments, sprang up. Science took a special bias from the classics, and philosophy was so strongly permeated by antique doctrines that the Revival of Learning may be justly said to have checked the spontaneity of the Italian intellect. There was not enough time for students to absorb antiquity and pass beyond it, before the mortmain of the Church and the Spaniard was laid upon the fairest provinces of thought. To trace the course of Italian philosophy, is, however, no part of my scheme in this volume. The Aristotelian and Platonic controversies on the nature of the soul, the materialism of Pietro Pomponazzo, the gradual emergence of powerful thinkers like Bruno and Campanella, the theological rationalism of Aonio Paleario, and the final suppression of free thought by the Church, belong to the history of the Counter-Reformation. To the same sad chapter of Italian history must be relegated the labours of the earliest mathematicians, astronomers, and cosmographers, who, poring over the texts of Ptolemy and Euclid, anticipated Copernicus, impelled Columbus to his enterprise, and led the way for Galileo. The infamy of having rendered science and philosophy abortive in Italy, when its early show of blossom was so promising, falls upon the Popes and princes of the last half of the sixteenth century. The narrative of their emergence from the studies of the humanists must form the prelude to a future work treating of Farnesi and Caraffas, Inquisitors and Jesuits. Only by showing the growth which might have been, can we demonstrate the atrophy that was.

It remains in this chapter to describe the fourth period of humanism, when Italy, still permeated with the spirit of the classical, revival, laid down laws of social breeding for the nations of the North. Few things are more difficult than to set forth without exaggeration, and yet with sufficient force, the so-called Paganism of Renaissance Italy. At first sight, and from certain points of view, it seems as though the exclusive study of the classics had wrought a thorough metamorphosis of morality and manners. When, on reflection, this appearance is seen to be illusory, we incline, perhaps, to the contrary conclusion that scholarship only set a kind of fashion without taking deep hold even on the imagination of the people. A more complete acquaintance with the period makes it clear that the imitation of the ancients in thought, senti-

ment, and language was no mere affectation, and that, however partial its influences may have been, they were not superficial. In the first volume of this work I tried to show to what extent the patriotism of tyrannicides and the profligacy of courtiers were alike related to the prevailing study of the ancient world. It was no small matter that the vices and the virtues, the worldliness and the enthusiasm, of that many-featured age, together with its supreme achievements in art, its ripest productions in literature, should have gradually assumed a classic form. The standards of moral and æsthetic taste were paganised, though the nation at large remained unchanged in Catholicity. It was precisely this discord between the professed religion of the people and the heathenism of its ideal that inspired Savonarola with his prophecy.

Classical style being the requirement of the age, it followed that everything was sacrificed to this. In christening their children the great families abandoned the saints of the calendar and chose names from mythology. Ettore, Achille, Atalanta, Penthesilea, Lucrezia, Porzia, Alessandro, Annibale, Laomedonte, Fedro, Ippolito, and many other antique titles became fashionable. Those who were able to do so turned their baptismal names into Latin or Greek equivalents. Janus or Jovianus passed for Giovanni, Pierius for Pietro, Aonius for Antonio, Lucius Grassus for Luca Grasso; the German prelate John Goritz was known as Corycius,<sup>1</sup> and the Roman professor Gianpaolo Parisio as Janus Parrhasius. Writers who undertook to treat of modern or religious themes, were driven by their zeal for purism to the strangest expedients of language. God, in the Latin of the sixteenth century, is *Jupiter Optimus Maximus*; Providence becomes *Fatum*; the saints are *Divi*, and their statues *simulacra sancta Deorum*. Our Lady of Loreto is changed into *Dea Lauretana*, Peter and Paul into *Dii tutelares Romæ*, the souls of the just into *Manes pii*, and the Pope's excommunication into *Diræ*. The Holy Father himself takes the style of *Pontifex Maximus*; his tiara, by a wild confusion of ideas, is described as *infula Romulea*. Nuns are Vestals and cardinals Augurs. For the festivals of the Church periphrases were found, whereof the following may be cited as a fair specimen:<sup>2</sup> *Verum accidit ut eo ipso die, quo domum ejus accesseram, ipse piæ rei causâ septem sacrosancta Divûm pulvinaria supplicaturus invenirerit; erant enim lustrici dies, quos unoquoque anno quadragenos purificatione consecravat nostra pietas.*

It need hardly be added that, when the obligations of Latinity had reached this point, to read Cicero was of far more importance than to study the Fathers of the Church. Bembo, it is well known, advised Sadoleto to 'avoid the Epistles of S. Paul, lest his barbarous style should spoil your taste: *Omitte has nugas, non enim decent graven virum tales ineptiæ.*' The extent, however, to which formal purism in Latinity

<sup>1</sup> Namque sub Cæbalie memini me turribus altis  
Qua niger humectat flaventia culta Galesus  
Corycium vidisse senem.—Virg. Georg. lib. iv. 125.

<sup>2</sup> From the exordium to Valeriano's treatise *De Infelicitate Litteratorum*.

was carried, may be best observed in the 'Christiad' of Vida, and the poem 'De Partu Virginis' of Sannazzaro.<sup>3</sup> Sannazzaro not only invokes the muses of Helicon to sing the birth of Christ, but he also makes Proteus prophesy his advent to the river-god of Jordan. The arch-angel discovers Mary—described by the poet as *spes fida Deorum*—intent on reading nothing less humanistic than the Sibyls; and after she has received his message, the spirits of the patriarchs are said to shout because they will escape from Tartarus and Acheron and the hideous baying of the triple-throated hound.

It might be reasonably urged against Milton that in the 'Paradise Regained' he somewhat impairs the religious grandeur of his subject by investing it with the forms of the classical epic. If he has erred in this direction, it is as nothing compared with the pseudo-Pagan travesty of Vida. God the Father in the 'Christiad' is spoken of as *Superum Pater nimbipotens* and *Regnator Olympi*—titles which had their real significance in Latin mythology, being transferred with frigid formalism to a Deity whose essence is spiritual, and whose cult has no admixture of nature worship. Jesus is invariably described as *Heros*; this absurdity reaches its climax in the following phrase about the bad thief on the cross:—

Ipse etiam verbis morientem heroa superbis  
Stringebat.

The machinery whereby the Jews are brought to will the death of Christ is no less ridiculous. Instead of attempting to set religious or ethical motives into play, Vida introduces a gang of Gorgons, Harpies, Centaurs, Hydras, and the like. The bread of the Last Supper appears under the disguise of *sinceram Cererem*. The wine mingled with gall, offered to our Lord upon the cross, is *corrupti pocula Bacchi*. The only excuse for these grotesque compromises between the Biblical subject-matter and its mythological expression is, that in any other way it would have been impossible to give the form of pure Latinity to the verse. The poet failed to comprehend that he was producing a masterpiece of *barocco* mannerism, spoiling at once the style he sought to use and the theme he undertook to illustrate. It was enough for him to fit the Roman toga to his saints and Pharisees, and to tickle the taste of a learned audience by allusions that reminded them of Virgil. The same bathos was reached by Bembo when he invented the paraphrase of 'heavenly zephyr' for the Holy Ghost, and described the Venetian Council bidding a Pope *uti fidat diis immortalibus, quorum vices in terrâ gerit*. It is not the profanity of these phrases so much as their æsthetic emptiness, the discord between the meaning intended to be conveyed and the literary form, that strikes a modern critic.

<sup>3</sup> Lilius Gyraldus, in his dialogue 'De Poetis Nostri Temporis,' *Opp.* vol. ii. p. 384, mentions a critic who was so stupid as to *desiderare in Pontano et si deus placet in Sannazzario Christianam elocutionem, hoc est barbaram!*



When the same poets break out into honest Paganism, in the frank verses written by Bembo for Priapus, in Beccadelli's epigrams, or in the elegies of Acon and Iolas, we feel that they are more artistically justified. The following lines, for instance, from Vida's 'Poetics,' have a true ring and beauty of their own. He is addressing Virgil as a saint:—

Te colimus, tibi certa damus, tibi thura, tibi aras,  
Et tibi rite sacrum semper dicemus honorem.

Or again—

Nos aspice præsens,  
Pectoribusque tuos castis infunde calores  
Adveniens pater, atque animis te te inserte nostris.

There is no confusion here between the feeling and the language chosen to express it. The sentiment, if somewhat artificial and unreal, is at least adequate to the form.

I have entered at some length into the illustration of puristic Latinisms, because they seem to represent the culminating point of classic studies, in so far as these affected taste in general, and also because they are specially characteristic of the period of which I have now to treat. It was at Rome, among the great ecclesiastics, that these Pagan fashions principally flourished. Eminence of all kinds found a home with Leo X., assuming the purple of the prelate and the scarlet of the cardinal at his indulgent hands. The genius of the Renaissance seemed to have followed this first Medicean Pope from Florence. Though Leo was a man of merely pleasure-loving and receptive temperament, who left no lasting impress on his age, he knew at least how to appreciate ability, and found the height of his enjoyment in the arts and letters he enthusiastically patronised. This sybarite of intellectual and sensual luxury gave his name to what is called the golden age of Italian literature, chiefly because he attracted the best wits to Rome and received the flatteries of men whose work survived them.

History presents few spectacles more striking than that of Rome in the pontificate of Leo. While the Papacy has become a secular sovereignty, learning and arts have assumed the sacerdotal habit, and the boldest immoralities of a society comparable to that of the ancient Empire flourish in the petty Courts of ecclesiastical princes. The capital of Christendom is full of priests; but the priests are men of pleasure and the world—elegant Latinists and florid rhetoricians, raised to posts of eminence by reason of their brilliant gifts. We have seen already how the humanists made their way into the Roman Curia as writers and abbreviators, and how liberally Nicholas V. rewarded learning. Yet, however indispensable the scholars of the fifteenth century became, they rarely rose above the rank of Apostolic secretaries; while few of the professional humanists cared to take orders in the Church. They were satisfied with official emoluments and semi-secular benefices. All this was now altered. The most distinguished men of letters made the Church their profession. Sadoleto, Bembo, and Aleander, who began

their career under Leo, received the hats of cardinals from Paul III. Paulus Jovius was consecrated Bishop of Nocera by Clement VII., and retired to Como in disgust because he failed to get the scarlet in 1549. Marcus Musurus, created Bishop of Malvasia, is said to have died of disappointment when he saw the same dignity beyond his reach. Vida, the Latin poet, obtained the see of Alba in Piedmont, and Giberti, the accomplished stylist, that of Verona, from Clement VII. All these men had made their mark at Leo's Court, who set the example, followed by his Medicean successor, of rewarding mundane talents and accomplishment with ecclesiastical distinctions. The question, seriously entertained, of admitting Raphael to the Sacred College proves to what extent the highest honours of the Church had come to be esteemed as prizes, and justifies to some extent Pietro Aretino's arrogant offer to sell his services to the Papacy in exchange for a cardinal's hat.

The biographies of these favourites of fortune offer strong points of similarity. Whether born of noble families, like Bembo, or raised from comparative obscurity, like Bibbiena, they early in life attached themselves to some distinguished prince,<sup>4</sup> or entered the service of a great ecclesiastic. Their literary talents, social accomplishments, successes with women, and diplomatic service at the centres of Italian politics brought them still further into notice. Thus Sadoletto's Latin poem on the Laocoon, Bibbiena's 'Calandra,' Inghirami's acting of the part of Phædra in Seneca's 'Hippolytus,' and Bembo's friendship with Lucrezia Borgia might be cited as turning-points in the early history of these illustrious prelates. Having thus acquired position by their personal gifts, they travelled to Rome in the suite of their respective patrons, and obtained office at the hands of Leo. Sadoletto and Bembo became his secretaries. Inghirami superintended the Vatican Library.<sup>5</sup> Bibbiena's versatile abilities were divided between the duties of State minister and master of the revels. As they had built their fortunes by the help of eminent protectors, they now in their turn took the rank of patrons. In addition to the Vatican, Rome displayed a multitude of petty Courts and minor circles. Each cardinal and each ambassador held a jurisdiction independent of the Pope, and not unfrequently in opposition to the ruling power. To found academies, to gather clever men around them, and to play the part of Mæcenas was the ambition of these subordinate princes. During the pontificate of Leo the Cardinals Riario, Giulio de' Medici, Bibbiena, Petrucci, Farnese, Alidosi, and Gonzaga, not to mention others, entertained their own following of flatterers and poets, who danced attendance at their levees, accompanied them in public, and earned a meagre pittance by compliments and dedications. Some of these priestly patrons affected the arts, others the sciences; others again, and these the majority, bestowed their

<sup>4</sup> See Vol. I., *Age of the Despots*, p. 94.

<sup>5</sup> He held this post under Julius II.

favours upon literature. Ippolito de' Medici is said to have maintained a retinue of three hundred poets, among whom are mentioned the elegant Molza and the learned Valeriano. The fashion thus set by Leo and the Sacred College was followed by all eminent men in Rome. The banker Agostino Chigi made himself a name not only by his patronage of painters, but also by the private Greek press founded in his house.<sup>6</sup> Baldassare Turini devoted himself to the arts of building and of decoration. Baldassare Castiglione, as ambassador from Mantua and Ferrara, and Alberto Pio, as prince of Carpi and ambassador from France, dispensed the hospitality of their palaces to scholars, among whom they held no inconsiderable rank on their own merits.

Libraries, collections of statues and of pictures, frescoes painted from mythological subjects, garden-houses planned upon the antique model, Latin inscriptions, busts of the emperors, baths and banquet chambers decorated in the manner of the Roman ruins—on such objects the wealth of the Church was being prodigally spent. Posterity has reason to deplore the non-appearance of a satirist in this Papal society, so curiously similar to that of Imperial Rome. Horace would, indeed, have found ample materials for humorous delineation, whether he had chosen to deride the needy clients leaving their lodgings before day-break to crowd a prelate's antechamber, or the parasites on whom coarse practical jokes were played in the Pope's presence, or the flatterers who praised their master's mock virtues in hour-long declamations. Foul vices than vanity, hypocrisy, and servility supplied fit subjects for invectives no less fiery than the second and the sixth of Juvenal. At Rome virtuous women had no place; but Phryne lived again in the person of Imperia, and dignitaries of the Church thought it no shame to parade their preference for Giton.<sup>7</sup> In the absence of a Horace or a Juvenal, we have to content ourselves with Bandello and other novelists, and with one precious epistle of Ariosto describing the difficulty of conducting business at the Papal Court except by way of backstairs influence and antechamber intrigue.

To over-estimate the moral corruption of Rome at the beginning of the sixteenth century is almost impossible. To over-rate the real value of a literature that culminated in the subtleties of rhetoric and style is easy. Nor is it difficult to mistake, as many critics have done, the sunset of the fine arts for their meridian splendour. Yet, while we recognise the enervation of society in worse than heathen vices, and justly regard Rome as the hostelry of alien arts and letters rather than the mother city of great men, we cannot blind our eyes to the varied lights

<sup>6</sup> The first Greek book printed in Rome, an edition of Pindar by Cornelius Benignius, 1515, issued from Chigi's press under the superintendence of Zacharias Kalliergos of Crete. Concerning this printer see Didot, *Alde Manuce*, pp. 544-578.

<sup>7</sup> The epitaph of Bella Imperia proves that the title of Hetæra was thought honourable: 'Imperia, Cortisana Romana, quæ digna tanto nomine, raræ inter homines formæ specimen dedit. Vixit a. xxvi. d. xii. Obiit mœxi., die xv. Aug.' Berni's *Capitolo sopra un Garzone* may be referred to for the second half of the sentence.

and colours of that Court, unique in modern history. The culture toward which the Italian society had long been tending, was here completed. The stamp of universality had been given to the fine arts and to literature by the only potentate who at that moment claimed allegiance from united Christendom. As the eloquent historian of the town of Rome observes, 'the richest intellectual life here blossomed in a swamp of vices.' It was not the life of great poetry: that had perished long ago with Dante. It was not the life of genuine science: that was destined to be born with Galileo. It was not the life of comprehensive scholarship: that slept in the grave of Poliziano. It was not even the life of progressive art; for Raphael died in this age, and though Michael Angelo survived it, his genius had no successors. But it was the life of culture, rendering the rudest and most vicious sensitive to softening influences, and preparing for more powerful nations the possibilities of great achievements.

Amid political debility and moral corruption an ideal of refinement, adopted from antiquity, and assimilated to modern modes of living, had been formed. This was the most perfect bloom of the Renaissance, destined to survive the decay of humanism, and to be for subsequent civilisation what chivalry was for the Middle Ages. Through the continued effort of patricians and of scholars to acquire the tone of classic culture, something like antique urbanity had reappeared at Florence and in Rome; while several generations devoted to polite studies had produced a race distinguished above all things for its intellectual delicacy. The effect of this æsthetic atmosphere upon visitors from the North was singularly varied. Luther, who came to see the City of the Saints, found in Rome the sink of all abominations, the very lair of Antichrist. The *comitas* and the *facetiae* of the prelates were to him the object of unmitigated loathing. Erasmus, on the contrary, wrote from London that nothing but Lethe could efface his memory of that radiant city—its freedom of discourse, its light, its libraries, its honeyed converse of most learned scholars, its large style of life, and all those works of art that made of Rome the theatre of nations. The Italians themselves lessoned by the tragedy of 1527, looked back with no less mingled feelings upon Leo's Rome. La Casa mentions the *nimia humanitatis suavitatis*—the excess of sweetness in all that makes society humane—as a characteristic of the past age. That excessive sweetness of civility, the final product of the arts and scholarship of Italy, when diffused through Europe and tempered to the taste of sterner nationalities, became the politeness of France under Louis XIV., the *bel air* of Queen Anne's courtiers.

The Roman Academy still continued to be active, meeting at the palaces of more than one great prelate. The gardens of Angelo Colocci, Leo's secretary, a friend of John Lascaris, and himself no inconsiderable stylist, formed its headquarters. Sometimes the poet Blossius Paladius received the associates in his villa by the Tiber; sometimes they enjoyed the hospitality of Egidius Canisius, General of the Augustine

Order; at one time they sought the house of Sadoletto on the Quirinal; at another they feasted in the vineyard of John Goritz, the Corycius Senex. The festivals of this learned society, to judge by the descriptions of its members, were distinguished by antique simplicity and good taste, contrasting powerfully with the banquets of mere mundane prelates.<sup>8</sup> When Agostino Chigi entertained the Academicians in the Villa Farnesina, he chastened his magnificence to suit the spirit of their founder, Lætus, and omitted those displays of vulgar pomp that marked his wedding banquet.<sup>9</sup>

The muster-roll of the Academy brings the most eminent wits of Rome before us. First and foremost stands Pietro Bembo, the man of letters, who like Petrarch, Poggio, and Poliziano, may be chosen as the fullest representative of his own age of culture. His father, Bernardo Bembo, was a Venetian of noble birth and education. To his generous enthusiasm for Italian literature Ravenna owes the tomb of Dante. Pietro was born at Florence in 1470, and received his early education in that city. Therefore the Tuscans claim his much-praised purity of diction for their gift. He afterwards studied Greek at Messina under Constantine Lascaris, and learned philosophy from Pomponazzo at Padua. When his master's treatise on the 'Immortality of the Soul,' was condemned by the Lateran Council, Bembo used his influence successfully in his behalf. Though he denied the demonstrability of the doctrine, and maintained that Aristotle gave it no support, Pomponazzo was only censured, instead of being burned like Bruno. This good fortune was due, however, less to his pupil's advocacy than to the non-chalance of Leo. Having completed his academical studies in 1498, Bembo joined his father at the brilliant Court of the Estensi. When Lucrezia Borgia entered Ferrara in 1502 she was still in the zenith of her beauty. Her father, Alexander, grew daily more powerful in Rome; while her brother held the central States of Italy within his grasp. The greatness of the Borgias reflected honour on the bride of Alfonso d' Este; and though the princes of Ferrara at first received her with reluctance, they were soon won over by her grace. Between the princess and the courtly scholar a friendship speedily sprang up, which strengthened with years and was maintained by correspondence at a distance. To Lucrezia Bembo dedicated 'Gli Asolani,' a dialogue in the Italian tongue upon Platonic love,<sup>10</sup> by far the freest and most genial of his writings. The collection of his Latin poems contains an epigram upon a golden serpent clasped above her wrist, and an elegy in which he praises her singing, dancing, playing, and recitation:—

Quicquid agis, quicquid loqueris, delectat: et omnes  
Præ.edunt Charites, subsequiturque decor.

This liaison, famous in the annals of Italian literature, gave Bembo a

<sup>8</sup> See Tiraboschi, vii. 1, lib. i. c. 2.

<sup>9</sup> See Vol. I., *Age of the Despots*, p. 219.

<sup>10</sup> Written 1504. First printed by Aldo, 1505.

distinguished place in the great world. A touching memento of it—Lucrezia's letters and a tress of her long yellow hair—is still preserved at Milan in the Ambrosian Library.

From Ferrara Bembo passed to Urbino in 1506, where Guidobaldo da Montefeltre had gathered round him the brilliant group described in the 'Cortegiano.' The climax of that treatise, our most precious source of information on Court life in Italy, makes it clear that Bembo played the first part in a circle distinguished above all others at that time for refinement and wit. Many cities might boast of a larger and more splendid concourse of noble visitors; but none competed with Urbino for the polish of its manners and the breeding of its courtiers. In his dialogue in praise of Guidobaldo, Bembo paid a magnificent tribute to the prince from whose society he learned so much, and in whose service he remained till the Duke's death.<sup>11</sup> Giuliano de' Medici, with whom he lived on terms of intimacy at Urbino, took him to Rome in 1512. The reign of Leo was about to shed new lustre on the Medicean exiles. His victorious exclamation, to his brother, '*Godiamoci il Papato poichè Dio ce l' ha dato,*' had a ring of promise in it for their numerous friends and clients. Even without the recommendation of Giuliano, it is not likely that Leo would have overlooked a man so wholly after his own heart as Bembo. The qualities he most admired—smooth manners, a handsome person, wit in conversation, and thorough mastery of Latin style, without pretension to deep learning or much earnestness of purpose—were incarnate in the courtly Venetian. Bembo was precisely the man to make Leo's life agreeable by flattering his superficial tastes and subordinating the faculties of a highly cultivated mind to frivolous, if intellectual, amusements. The churchman who warned Sadoletto against spoiling his style by study of the Bible, the prosaist who passed his compositions through sixteen portfolios, revising them at each remove, the versifier who penned a hymn to S. Stephen and a monologue for Priapus with equal elegance, was cast in the same mould as the pleasure-loving Pontiff. For eight years he lived at Rome, honoured by the Medici and loved by all who knew him. His duties as secretary to Leo, shared by his old friend and fellow-student Sadoletto, were not onerous; while the society of the capital afforded opportunity for the display of his most brilliant gifts. In 1520, wearied by nearly thirty years of continual Court life, and broken down in health by severe sickness, Bembo retired to Padua. The collection of a library and museum, horticulture, correspondence, and the cultivation of his studied Ciceronian style now occupied his leisure through nineteen most disastrous years for Italy. The learned courtiers of that age liked thus to play the Roman in their villas, quoting Horace and Virgil on the charms of rustic life, and fancying they caught the spirit of Cincinnatus while they strolled about the farm. Bembo's Paduan retreat became the rendezvous of all the ablest men in Italy, the centre of a fluctuating society

<sup>11</sup> 'De Guido Ubaldo Feretrio deque Elisabetha Gonzaga Urbini Ducibus.'

of highest culture. Paul III. recalled him to Rome, and made him cardinal in 1539. When he died in 1547 he was buried not far from Leo in the Church of the Minerva. A fair slab of marble marks his grave.

Bembo succeeded Poliziano in the dictatorship of Italian letters. Like Poliziano, he was both a scholar and a writer of Italian; but he was far from possessing the comprehensive understanding or the genius of his predecessor. Of all the 'apes of Cicero' scoffed at by Erasmus, he stood first and foremost. His exclusive devotion to one favourite author made his Latin stiff and mannered. Tuscan critics again have complained that his Italian style lacks nerve and idiom. He wrote like an alien, not one to the manner born. In his dread of not writing correctly, he ended by expressing tame thoughts with frigid formality. Even a foreigner can see that he used Italian, as he used Latin, without yielding to natural impulse, and with the constant effort to attain a fixed ideal. The mark of the file may be observed on every period. Raciness and spontaneity are words that have no meaning when applied to him. The decadence of Italian prose composition into laboured mannerism and meticulous propriety should be traced in a great measure to his influence. Yet Bembo deserves credit for having braved the opinion of the learned by his cultivation of the vulgar tongue; and on this point some verses from a Latin poem to Ercole Strozzi deserve quotation in a note.<sup>12</sup>

Jacopo Sadoletto's career was not dissimilar to that of his friend Bembo, though the two men offer many points of difference in character and turn of mind. Born at Modena in 1477, he studied Latin at Ferrara, and Greek at Rome, where he settled in the reign of Alexander VI. His copy of hexameters on the newly-discovered statue of Laocoon made him famous. Frigid and laboured as these verses may appear to us, who read them like a prize exercise, they had the merit of originality when first produced. Leo made the poet his secretary and Bishop of Carpentras. Sadoletto passed a good portion of his life in the duties of his see, composing moral treatises, annotating the Psalms, and publishing a 'Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans.'<sup>13</sup> Though strongly tintured with Ciceronian purism, his taste was more austere

<sup>12</sup> Nam pol quâ proavusque avusque lingua  
Sunt olim meus et tuus loquuti,  
Nostræ quâque loquuntur et sorores  
Et matertera nunc et ipsa mater,  
Nos nescire loqui magis pudendum est,  
Qui Graiæ damus et damus Latinæ  
Studi tempora duplicemque curam,  
Quam Graiâ simul et simul Latinâ.  
Hac uti ut valeas tibi videndum est,  
Ne dum marmoreas remotâ in orâ  
Sumto construis et labore villas,  
Domi te calamo tegas palustri.

*Carmina Quinque Illustrium Poetarum*, p. 25.

<sup>13</sup> His most famous essays bore these titles: *De Liberis Instituentis* and *De Laudibus Philosophiæ*.



than Bembo's. Nature had given him an intellect adapted to grave studies, sincerity of purpose, and true piety. Living in the dawn of the Reformation, Sadoletto was deeply conscious of the perils of the Church; nor did he escape the suspicion of sharing the new heresy.<sup>14</sup> His celebrated letter to Clement VII., after the sack of Rome in 1527, shows that he viewed this disaster as a punishment inflicted on the godless capital of Christendom. In 1536 Paul III. recalled him to Rome, and made him cardinal. He died in 1547, and was buried in S. Pietro in Vincoli. Sadoletto's correspondence may be reckoned among the most valuable materials for the literary annals of this period.

Next to Sadoletto a place must be found for the grave and studious Egidio Canisio. He was born at Viterbo in 1470, and was therefore an exact contemporary of Bembo. His powers of Latin oratory gained him the fame of a great speaker, and the address with which he opened the Lateran Council in 1512 was committed to the press in that year. Egidius was already General of the Augustine Order. Five years later he received the red hat of a cardinal, and in 1518 he represented the Holy See as Legate at the Court of Spain. He died in 1532, leaving a vast mass of miscellaneous works on theology, philosophy, Biblical criticism, and universal history. Few of these have been printed. It is said that, besides Greek and Latin, he was a master of Hebrew and Chaldee, Turkish, Persian, and Arabic.

A more brilliant figure is presented by the witty but unscrupulous historian Paulus Jovius. He was born at Como in 1483, and came at the age of thirty-three to Rome, with the beginning of his comprehensive History already written.<sup>15</sup> Leo, who delighted in listening to recitations of new literary works, declared that nothing had been penned more perfect since the days of Livy. This high praise induced Jovius to fix his residence at Rome, where Clement VII. made him Bishop of Nocera in 1528. After spending twenty-one years in the expectation, continually frustrated, of being received in the Sacred College, he retired to Como, and died at Florence in 1552. Jovius was the cleverest of all the Latinists produced by the Italians. His style is fluent, sparkling with anecdote, highly picturesque in its descriptive passages, and adorned by characteristic details. In addition to the histories, he produced a series of biographies of great and varied value, some of which are libels, others panegyrics, while all are marked by acute observation and mastery of the matter in hand. He was wont to say that he could use a golden or a silver pen at will: the golden was exercised upon the Life of Leo; the silver, dipped in ironic gall, upon the Life of Hadrian. The sketches of eminent men, known by the name of 'Elogia,' were composed in illustration of a picture gallery of portraits collected in his villa. They include not only Italians, but Greeks, Germans, French

<sup>14</sup> His *Commentary on the Romans* was placed upon the Index.

<sup>15</sup> Like the History of Guicciardini, it opens with the year 1494. It is carried down to 1547. A portion of the first decade was lost in the sack of Rome, and never rewritten by the author. Printed at Florence, 1550.

and English worthies, dead and living notabilities of every kind.<sup>16</sup> If Brantôme had chosen Latin instead of French, he would have made a book not altogether unlike this of Jovius. The versatility of the author was further illustrated by a Latin treatise on Roman fishes, and by an Italian essay on mottoes and devices.<sup>17</sup>

Among the celebrities of the Roman Academy a place apart must be reserved for Baldassare Castiglione; for though his biography belongs to the political even more than to the literary annals of the period, few men represent the age of Leo in its culture with more dignity and grace combined. He was born in 1478 at Casatico, in the Duchy of Mantua; his father's family held the county of Castiglione, and his mother was a Gonzaga. In his youth he received an education framed upon the system set in vogue by Vittorino and Guarino, and became the living illustration of those varied accomplishments which he described in the 'Cortegiano.' His scholarship was sound and elegant; as a writer of Latin verse he distinguished himself among the best men of his generation. Sensitive to the beauty of the arts, he proved an excellent critic of modern painting and of antique sculpture, and assisted Raphael in the composition of his famous letter to Leo on the exploration of Rome. At the same time he did not neglect the athletic exercises which formed an indispensable branch of an Italian nobleman's training. Cultivated at all points, he early devoted his abilities to the service of princes; for at this period in Italy there was no sphere for such a character outside the Courts. After spending some time at Milan and Naples, Castiglione removed to Rome, where Julius II. discerned the use that might be made of him in furthering the interests of his nephew Francesco Maria della Rovere. Federigo da Montefeltre, Duke of Urbino, had died in 1482, leaving his son Guidobaldo in possession of his fiefs and titles; but it was known that this prince could have no heirs. In him the male line of the Montefeltri ended. His sister Giovanna had been married to Giovanni della Rovere, a brother of the Pope, and Julius hoped that their son, Francesco Maria might be declared successor to the Duchy of Urbino. Castiglione therefore attached himself to the person of Guidobaldo, with the special purpose of making himself necessary to the princes of Urbino and furthering the claims of Francesco, then a boy of about fifteen. Of his residence at Urbino, and of the polished splendour of Guidobaldo's Court, he has left an ever-memorable record in his 'Cortegiano,' that mirror of gentle breeding for the sixteenth century in Europe. Guidobaldo received the Count of Castiglione with marked favour, made him captain of fifty men at arms, and employed him in several offices of trust. Not the least important of these was the mission to England, undertaken in 1506 by Castiglione as Guidobaldo's proxy for receiving from Henry VII. the

<sup>16</sup> *Elogia Virorum literis illustrium, quotquot vel nostrâ, vel avorum memoriâ vixere, and Elogia Virorum bellicâ virtute illustrium*, Basle, 1557.

<sup>17</sup> *De Piscibus Romanis*, Rome, 1524. *Ragionamento sopra i Motti e Disegni d'Arme e d' Amore*.

investiture of the Garter. After the death of Guidobaldo, Francesco Maria della Rovere was proclaimed Duke of Urbino, and Castiglione continued to enjoy his confidence until the year 1517, when Leo succeeded in placing his nephew Lorenzo de' Medici upon the Ducal throne.

Castiglione was now deprived of what had become the necessity of his life, a post of honour in the Court of a reigning sovereign. He therefore transferred his allegiance to his natural lord, the Marquis of Mantua, who appointed him ambassador at Rome. The first and most brilliant period of the courtier's life was passed at Urbino; the second, less fruitful in literary achievement, embraced his residence among the wits of Leo's circle. At Rome Castiglione adapted himself to the customs of the papal society, penning Latin elegiacs, consorting with artists, and exercising the pleasant patronage of a refined Mæcenæ. His friendship with Raphael is not the least interesting episode in this chapter of his biography. Substantial records of it still remain in the epitaph composed by the courtly scholar on the painter, and in Castiglione's portrait now preserved in the Louvre collection. That picture represents the very model of an Italian nobleman as culture and Court life had made him—tranquil, with grave open eyes, and a mouth as well suited for urbane discourse as gentle merriment. The owner of this face was not born to lead armies or to control unruly multitudes, but to pass his time in the *loggie* of princes—self-contained and qualified to win favour without the sacrifice of personal dignity. It forms a strong contrast to earlier and later portraits—to that of Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta, for example, and to the Spanish grandees of the next century. Castiglione was still in Rome during the pontificate of Clement VII., who, recognizing his great ability as a diplomatist, sent him to Charles V. At Madrid the Pope's nuncio was unable to avert the disaster of 1527, and Castiglione had the bitter mortification of hearing at a distance how the Rome he knew and loved so well, had been ravaged by the brigands of Germany and Spain. It is clear, however, from the diplomatic correspondence of that memorable moment, and from the letter addressed by Clement to Castiglione's mother in 1529, that he never lost the confidence of his master; in spite of his failure to negotiate between them, he was respected alike by the Pope and the Emperor. He died at Toledo two years after the sack of Rome, worn out, it is said, by disappointment and regret. Not only in his book of the 'Courtier,' but also in his life, Castiglione illustrated the best qualities of an Italian gentleman, moulded by the political and social conditions of the sixteenth century into a refined scholar and a courtly diplomatist.

Of Alberto Pio, whose life in some respects may be compared with Castiglione's, I have had occasion to speak in the last chapter. His first cousin, Gian Francesco Pico della Mirandola, demands more than passing notice. By no prince of that troubled period were the cruel vicissitudes of Italian politics more painfully experienced. Few of the scholars could boast of wider learning and a nobler spirit. He was

born in 1470, and succeeded his father, Galeotto, in the lordship of Mirandola. In 1502 his brother Lodovico expelled him from his capital. Julian II. restored him. After being dispossessed a second time by Trivulzi, general of the French forces, he was once more reinstated, but only for a brief period. His nephew, Galeazzo, murdered him in 1533 before the crucifix, together with his heir, Alberto. In the intervals of his unquiet and unhappy life, Gian Francesco Pico devoted himself to studies not unlike those of his more famous uncle.<sup>18</sup> Early in his youth he had conceived the strongest admiration for Savonarola; and the work by which he is best known to posterity is a Life of his great master. Savonarola's principles continued to rule his thought and conduct through life. During the pontificate of Leo he composed a long address to the Lateran Council upon the reformation of the Church,<sup>19</sup> and dared to entertain the friendship of Reuchlin and Willibad Pirckheimer. His residence in Rome, and the dedication of his treatise on 'Divine Love' to Leo, justify our ranking him with the Roman scholars.

If Gian Francesco Pico and Sadoletto bring us close upon the threshold of the German Reformation, we cross it in the company of Aleander. Jerome Aleander was born at Motta, in the Marches of Treviso, in the year 1480. His studies, more comprehensive than those of the stylists, included theology, philosophy, and science, together with the Oriental languages, in addition to the indispensable Greek and Latin culture. Before he reached the age of thirty he travelled to Paris, and professed Hebrew and the humanities at the University. French scholarship may be said to date from the impulse given to these subjects by Aleander, who rose to such fame that he was made Rector of the University. After leaving Paris, he spent some time in Germany, and came first to Rome in 1516 in the train of Erard van der Mark, Bishop of Lüttich. Here Leo appointed him librarian of the Vatican. The rest of Aleander's life was spent in the service of the Church. Despatched as *nuntius* to Germany by Leo in 1520, he vainly attempted, as all students of the Reformation know, to quench the fire of Luther's kindling. When he returned to Italy, Clement VII. gave him the archbishopric of Brindisi, and Paul III. raised him to the scarlet in 1538. He died in 1542, leaving in France the memory of his unrivalled learning, in Germany the fame of an intolerant persecutor, in Italy the reputation of a staunch though unsuccessful champion of the Church.

Aleander's three predecessors in the Vatican Library—Tommaso Inghirami of Siena, Filippo Beroaldo of Bologna, and Zanobio Acciaiuoli of Florence—made their mark in Roman society by erudition rather than by authorship.<sup>20</sup> Inghirami's eloquence won the admiration of

<sup>18</sup> The titles of his philosophical works—*De Studio divinæ et humanæ philosophiæ, De amore Divino, Examen vanitatis doctrinæ gentium et veritatis Christianæ disciplinæ, De rerum præratione*—show how closely he followed in the footsteps of Giovanni Pico.

<sup>19</sup> *Joannis Francisci Pici Mirandolæ et Concordiæ Comitûs Oratio ad Leon X. et Concilium Lateranense de reformandis Ecclesiæ moribus.*

<sup>20</sup> Inghirami, made librarian 1510, died 1516. Beroaldo held the office two years, and died 1518. Acciaiuoli held it only for a few months. Aleander succeeded him in 1519.

contemporaries, who called him the second Cicero; as a writer he had no celebrity.<sup>21</sup> A fortunate find of MSS. at Bobbio earned for him the post of Vatican librarian. Leo, like all the members of the Medicean family, was bent upon the rediscovery of buried classics. But the world had been already ransacked, and, though he employed agents for this purpose in the East as well as Europe, only one great treasure came to light. Gian Angelo Arcimboldi disinterred the first five books of Tacitus's 'Annals' at Corvey, and sold them to the Pope for 500 golden florins. Filippo Beroaldo, who was entrusted with the task of editing this precious codex, received the librarianship as his reward. Leo's privilege granted to the printers of Beroaldo's edition expresses in truly noble language the highest ideal of humanism, and reflects real credit on his patronage of letters.<sup>22</sup> Of Acciaiuoli there is not much to say. His knowledge of Hebrew and the classic languages gained for him a reputation for singular learning. In his capacity as librarian he began to catalogue the documents of the 'Secreta Bibliotheca,' founded by Sixtus IV. It is worthy of notice that Acciaiuoli is the only Florentine whom we have occasion to mention among the learned courtiers of Leo. Florence, always foremost in the van of culture, had shaken off at this period the traditions of strict humanism.\* Her greatest writers, Guicciardini, Machiavelli, Varchi, Segni, and Giannotti, exchanged the Latin language for their mother speech, and sought for honour in fields removed from verbal scholarship or Ciceronian niceties of phrase.

The Roman Sapienza never held the same rank as the Universities of Padua or Bologna; nor could it compete as an academy of culture with the High Schools of Florence and Ferrara. The Popes of the Renaissance, occupied with nepotism and political aggrandisement, had but small care for the interests of education. Nor did Rome, always overcrowded by foreigners, require the students who brought custom and prestige to minor cities.<sup>23</sup> Leo X. resolved, as far as he was able, to raise the studies of his capital from the decadence into which they had fallen. In 1513 he reformed the statutes of the University, increased the appointments of the professors, and founded several new chairs. Yet, though scholars no less respectable than Janus Parrhasius of Cosenza, Tommaso Inghirami, and Filippo Beroaldo were numbered among the teachers, the Sapienza failed to take firm root in Rome:—the most flourishing school of humanism at this period was Ferrara, governed by Leonicens, Celio Calcagnini, and Lilius Gyraldus. To Hellenistic studies, just now upon the point of decadence in Italy, Leo gave encouragement by the establishment of a Greek press, and by the foundation of the Gymnasium Caballini Montis, where Joannes Lascaris and Marcus Musurus lectured. Musurus we have already learned to know as the inmate of Alberto Pio's palace at Carpi, and as Aldo's

<sup>21</sup> '*Lingua verius quam calamo celebrem . . . dictus sui seculi Cicero*,' says Erasmus. '*Affluentissimum eloquentiae flumen*' is Valeriano's phrase.

<sup>22</sup> See Burkhardt, p. 174. Roscoe's *Life of Leo X.* vol. i. p. 357.

<sup>23</sup> See above, p. 384.

most efficient helper. Soon after his elevation to the Papacy, Leo invited the venerable Lascaris to Rome; but he did not long retain the services of so illustrious a Hellenist. Lascaris, who had taught Greek in Paris during the reign of Charles VIII., and who had long served Louis XII. as ambassador at Venice, was induced by Francis I. to superintend the library at Fontainebleau in 1518. He once more visited Rome during the pontificate of Clement, and died there at the age of ninety—the last of the Greek exiles who transplanted Hellas into Latium. Between the visit of Manuel Chrysoloras in 1398 and the death of John Lascaris in 1535 more than a century had elapsed, in the course of which Italy,<sup>24</sup> after acquiring Greek literature and committing its chief treasures to the press, had seen her learning pass beyond the Alps and flourish with new vigour on a northern soil. The epitaph composed by Lascaris for his own tomb in Santa Agato touchingly expresses the grief of an exile for his country's servitude, together with the gratitude of one who found a new home in an alien land:—

Λάσκαρις ἀλλοδαπῇ γαίῃ ἐνικάθθητο, γαίῃ  
οὔτι λῆν ξείνῃν ὧ ξένη μεμφόμενος.  
εὕρετο μειλιχίην, ἀλλ' ἄχθεται εἰπερ Ἀχαιοῖς  
οὐδ' ἐτι χούν χεύει πάτρις ἐλευθέριον.

Any account of erudite society in Rome would be incomplete without some notice of its antiquaries. While the Pope and his cardinals were bent on collecting statues, coins, vases, and inscriptions, it was natural that the scholars should devote themselves to their illustration. Much of this industry was carried on by the academicians, who discussed difficult readings and exchanged opinions at their meetings. Treatises on Roman antiquities, topographical essays, and commentaries on Vitruvius and Frontinus abounded. Amid a multitude of minor works it will be enough to mention the cyclopædias of Andrea Fulvio and Bartolommeo Marliano, the comprehensive collection of inscriptions by Mazochi, and Valeriano's dissertation on the hieroglyphics of the Roman obelisks.<sup>25</sup> The greatest number of these compositions were published by Jacopo Mazochi, bookseller to the Roman Academy, and himself no mean scholar. Together with his coadjutor, Francesco Albertini, he undertook what he describes as 'the Herculean labour' of saving inscribed tablets from the lime-kiln and the mason's hammer. Built into the walls of houses, embedded in church pavements, mingled with the rubbish of the Forum, unearched by the mattock or the plough in vineyard and cornfields, these records of old history encumbered Rome. To decipher them as best he could, arrange them by the regions where they had been found, and incorporate his own

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Giovio, close of the *Elogia*.

<sup>25</sup> *Andreas Fulvius Sabinus Antiquarius, Antiquitates Urbis Romæ*, 1527. *Bartholomæus Marlianus, Eques D. Petri, Urbis Romæ Topographia*, 1534. *Jacobus Mazochius, Epigrammata antiquæ urbis Romæ*, 1521. *Johannis Pierii Valeriani Hieroglyphica seu de Sacris Ægyptiorum, &c.*, in his collected works, Ven. 1604.

readings with the previous collections of Ciriaco and Fra Giocondo,<sup>26</sup> was the object of Mazochi. His work formed the nucleus of the ponderous collection known as the *Corpus Inscriptionum*.

This is the proper occasion for resuming what has to be said about the Roman ruins, and the feeling for them shown in the Renaissance period. We have already listened to Poggio's lamentations over their gradual decay through wanton injury and lapse of time.<sup>27</sup> Pius II., who had a strong taste for topographical studies, endeavoured to protect the Roman monuments from depredation by a Bull in 1462. But his successors were less scrupulous. Even the scholarly Nicholas V. had shown more zeal for building modern Rome afresh than true regard for the imperial city. He levelled large portions of the wall of Servius Tullius, and quarried the Temple of Peace for his own edifices. In his days Blondus wrote that his life was embittered by the wholesale waste of ancient reliques. That Paul II. should have used the stone wall of the Coliseum for the Palace of S. Marco; that Sixtus IV. should have pulled down the circular Temple of Hercules, and destroyed the oldest bridge across the Tiber to make cannon balls; that Innocent VIII. should have empowered his architects to take what antique masonry they pleased—excites in us no wonder; these Popes were acting according to the spirit that was in them. Nor can it be denied that for some of their acts of Vandalism the excuse of utility or even of necessity might have been pleaded. It is, however, singular that no steps were taken to preserve in Rome the bas-reliefs and sculptures of the monuments thus overthrown. Everyone who chose laid hands upon them. Poggio scraped together what he could; Pomponius Lætus formed a museum; Lorenzo de' Medici and the Rucellai employed agents to select and ship to Florence choicer fragments. At last the impulse to collect possessed the Popes themselves. The Capitol Museum dates from 1471. The pretty statue of the boy pulling a thorn from his foot, the group of the lion clinging to a horse, the urn of Agrippina, and the bronze Hercules from the Forum Boarium formed the nucleus of this collection. Soon afterwards the equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius was unearthed and placed where it now stands. The Vatican Museum was founded in 1523, when Julius II. erected the Apollo on a marble basis near the entrance to the gardens of the Belvedere. It had been discovered some years earlier at Porto d'Anzo, and was bought by Giuliano della Rovere before he was made Pope. The Laocoon came to light in 1506 among the ruins of the baths of Titus in the vineyard of Felix de Fredis. How Giuliano di San Gallo and Michael Angelo heard of it, and walked abroad to see it disinterred, may still be read in the letter of Francesco, nephew of the former. Julius bought this group for six hundred golden crowns, and placed it in the Vatican. He also purchased the statue of the sleeping Ariadne, which then passed

<sup>26</sup> The architect of Verona who first edited Vitruvius, and was employed by Lorenzo de' Medici in collecting inscriptions for him at Rome.

<sup>27</sup> See above, p. 399.



for Cleopatra,<sup>28</sup> together with the torso of Hercules, found near the Palazzo Pio, and the statue of Commodus dug up in the Campo Fiore. Leo X. further enriched the collection by the reclining statues of the Nile and Tiber, found among the ruins of the Iseum near S. Stefano in Caco, and the so-called Antinous discovered in the Baths of Trajan.

The feeling of professed scholars for these masterpieces of classic art appears in Sadoletto's and Castiglione's poems, while a passage of Ghiberti's Commentary expresses the enthusiasm of technical sculptors. After describing an Hermaphrodite he saw in Rome, the Florentine sculptor adds: 'To express the perfection of learning, mastery, and art displayed in it is beyond the power of language. Its more exquisite beauties could not be discovered by the sight, but only by the touch of the hand passed over it.' Of another classic marble at Padua he says: 'This statue when the Christian faith triumphed, was hidden in that place by some gentle soul, who, seeing it so perfect, fashioned with art so wonderful, and with such power of genius, and being moved to reverent pity, caused a sepulchre of bricks to be built, and there within buried the statue, and covered it with a broad slab of stone, that it might not in any way be injured. It has very many sweet beauties, which the eyes alone can comprehend not, either by strong or tempered light; only the hand by touching finds them out.'<sup>29</sup> Meanwhile a genuine sentiment for the truth and beauty of antique art passed downwards from the educated classes to the people. Like all powerful emotions that affect the popular imagination at epochs of imperfect knowledge and high sensibility, it took the form of fable. The beautiful myth of Julia's Corpse is our most precious witness to this moment in the history of the Revival.<sup>30</sup> At the same time the real intention of classic statuary was better understood. Donatello had not worked in vain for a public, finely tempered to receive æsthetic influences, and cultivated by two centuries of native art. The horsemen of Monte Cavalla ceased to be philosophers. Menander and Posidippus were no longer reckoned among the saints. In the age of Leo, Carlo Malatesta could not have thrown Virgil's statue into the Mincio;<sup>31</sup> nor would the republic of Siena have buried their antique Venus by stealth in the Florentine territory, hoping thereby to transfer to their foes the curse of heathenism.<sup>32</sup> The effect produced on less impressionable natures by the Belvedere statues transpires in a curious document penned by a Venetian ambassador to Rome in 1523.<sup>33</sup> It is so valuable for illustrating the average culture of the Italians at that epoch, that I may allow myself the pleasure of rendering a full account of it.

<sup>28</sup> See Castiglione's verses.

<sup>29</sup> *Terzo Commentario del Ghiberti, Frammenti Inediti*, in Le Monnier's Vasari, vol. i. pp. xi.-xiii. I have paraphrased rather than translated the original, which is touching by reason of its naiveté.

<sup>30</sup> See Vol. I., *Age of the Despots*, p. 12.

<sup>31</sup> See Rosmini's *Vittorino da Feltre*, p. 63, note.

<sup>32</sup> See Ghiberti's *Commentario*, in Le Monnier's Vasari, vol. i. p. xiv.

<sup>33</sup> Alberi, *Relazioni Venete*, serie ii. vol. iii. p. 114, &c.

Adrian VI., soon after his accession, had walled up eleven of the twelve doors, leading to the Belvedere. The Venetian envoys, however, received permission to visit this portion of the Vatican palace, and the single entrance was unlocked for them. After describing the beauty of the gardens, their cypresses and orangeries, the greenness of their lawns and the stately order of their paved avenues, the writer of the report arrives at the statues. 'In the midst of the garden are two very large men of marble, facing one another, twice the size of life, who lie in the attitude of sleep. One of these is the Tiber, the other the Nile, figures of vast antiquity; and from beneath them issue two fair fountains. On the first entrance into the garden, on the left hand, there is a kind of little chapel let into the wall, where, on a pedestal of marble, stands the Apollo, famous throughout the world, a statue of incomparable beauty and dignity, of life size and of finest marble. Somewhat farther on, in a similar alcove and raised on a like pedestal to the height of an altar from the ground, opposite a well of most perfect fashion, is the Laocoon, celebrated throughout the world, a statue of the highest excellence, of size like a natural man, with hairy beard, all naked. The sinews, veins, and proper muscles in each part are seen as well as in a living body; breath alone is wanting. He is in a posture between sitting and standing, with his two sons, one on either hand, both, together with himself, twined by the serpents, as Virgil says. And herein is seen so great merit of the artist, that better could not be; the languishing and dying are manifest to sight, and one of the boys on the right side is most tightly clipped by the snake twice girdled round him; one of the coils crossing his breasts and squeezing his heart, so that he is on the point of dying. The other boy on the left side is also girdled round by another serpent. While he seeks to drag the raging worm from his leg with his little arm, and cannot help himself at all, he raises his face, all tearful, crying to his father, and holding him with his other hand by the left arm. And seeing his unhappy father more deadly struck than he is, the double grief of this child is clear to view, the one for his own coming death, the other for his father's helplessness; and he so faints withal, that nothing remains for him but to breathe his last. It is impossible that human art can arrive at producing so great and so natural a masterpiece. Every part is perfect, except that Laocoon's right arm is wanting. He seems about forty years of age, and resembles Messer Girolamo Marcello of S. Tommaso; the two boys look eight and nine respectively. Not far distant, and similarly placed, is a very beautiful Venus of natural size, naked with a little drapery on her shoulders, that covers a portion of the waist; as very fair a figure as can be imagined by the mind; but the excellence of the Laocoon makes one forget this and the Apollo, who before was so famous.'

A systematic plan for exploring the monuments of old Rome, excavating its ruins, and bringing its buried treasures of statuary to light was furnished by Raphael in 1518. Leo had made him master of the works

at S. Peter's and general superintendent of antiquities.<sup>34</sup> For some time previously he had been studying Vitruvius in the Italian translation prepared for his use by Fabio Calvi of Ravenna. How enthusiastically he followed in the traces of the ancients, the arabesques of the Loggie, imitated from the frescoes of the Baths of Titus, amply prove. He now, not long before his death, laid down a ground-plan of the city, divided into fourteen regions, and set forth his project in a memorable letter to the Pope. This epistle, written in choice old Italian, has more than once been printed: it will be found in Passavant's *Life of the painter*. Raphael begins by describing the abandonment and desolation of the city, and by characterising its several styles of architecture—classical, Lombard, Gothic, and modern.<sup>35</sup> Some phrases that occur in this exordium deserve to be cited for the light they cast upon the passion which inspired those early excavators. 'Considerando la divinitate di quelli animi antichi . . . vedendo quasi il cadavere di quest' alma nobile cittate, che è stata regia del mondo, così miseramente lacerato . . . quanti pontefici hanno permesso le ruine et disfacimenti delli templi antichi, delle statue, delli archi et altri edificii, gloria delli lor fondatori! Quanti hanno comportato che solamente per pigliare terra pozzolano si siano scavati i fondamenti! Onde in poco tempo li edificii sono venuti a terra. Quanta calcina si è fatta di statue e d' altri ornamenti antichi! che ardirei dire che tutta questa nova Roma, che hor si vede, quanto grande ch'ella vi sia, quanto bella, quanto ornata di palazzi, di chiese et di alti edificii, sia fabricata di calcina fatta di marmi antichi.'<sup>36</sup> He then observes that during his twelve years' residence in Rome the Meta in the Via Alexandrina, the arches at the entrance to the Baths of Diocletian and the Temple of Ceres in the Via Sacra, part of the Foro Transitorio, and the larger portion of the Basilica del Foro have been destroyed. Therefore he prays Leo to arrest this work of the new Vandals, and, by pursuing a well-considered scheme of operations, to lay bare and to protect what still remains of antique monuments in the Eternal City.

Raphael's own death followed close upon the execution of the first part of a Roman map designed by him. Great interest had been excited in the world of letters by his undertaking; and its failure through his untimely end aroused the keenest disappointment. The epigrams

<sup>34</sup> By a brief dated Aug. 27, 1515.

<sup>35</sup> It may be observed that he calls the round-arched buildings of the Middle Ages Gothic; the pointed style German.

<sup>36</sup> 'When we reflect upon the divinity of those intellects of the old world . . . when we see the corpse of this noble city, mother and queen of the world, so piteously mangled . . . how many Pontiffs have allowed the ruin and defacement of ancient temples, statues, arches, and other buildings, the glory of their founders! How many have suffered their foundations to be undermined for the mere sake of quarrying *pozzolana*, whereby in a short time the buildings themselves have fallen to earth! How much lime has been made of statues and other antique decorations! I should not hesitate to say that the whole of this new Rome which now meets the eye, great as it is, and fair, and beautified with palaces and churches and other buildings, has been cemented with lime made from antique marbles.'

quoted below in a footnote express these feelings with more depth of emotion than scholarly elegance.<sup>37</sup> How Raphael's design would have been carried out it is impossible to guess. Archæological zeal is still impotent to stay the march of time, except by sacrifice of much that neglect alone makes venerable; and it may fairly be questioned whether it is wise to lay the hand of the restorer on these relics of the past. We at least, who during the last few years have seen the Coliseum and the Baths of Caracalla stripped of their romantic vegetation, the Palatine ruins fortified with modern masonry, and the dubious guesses of antiquaries placarded upon sign-posts for the instruction of Sunday visitors, may feel, perhaps, that a worse fate than slow decay or ruthless mutilation was still in store for the majestic corpse of ancient Rome. Nothing, in truth, is less sublime or more pitiful than a dismantled brick wall, robbed of its marbles and mosaics, naked of the covering of herbs that nature gave it, patched with plaster, propped with stonework, bound by girders, and smeared over with the trail of worse than snails or blind-worms—pedants bent on restoration.

The immediate and most important consequence of these antiquarian pursuits was the adoption of classic forms by architects and artists. Fresco-painters imitated the newly-discovered *grotesque* in their arabesques.<sup>38</sup> Sculptors abandoned Christian subjects for antique mythology, or gave the attributes of heroes to the saints of the Catholic Church. The principles of Vitruvius were applied as strictly as possible to modern buildings, and the free decoration of the earlier Renaissance yielded to what passed for purely classic ornaments. It would be incorrect to maintain that this reproduction of antiquity in art only dated from the age of Leo. Alberti and Brunelleschi, Bramante and Michelozzo, had, each in his own way, striven to assimilate to modern use the style of Roman architecture. Donatello and Michael Angelo at

<sup>37</sup> Tot proceres Romam, tam longa struxerat ætas,  
Totque hostes et tot sæcula diruerant;  
Nunc Romam in Româ quærit reperitque Raphael;  
Quærere magni hominis, sed reperire Dei est.

Celio Calcagnini.

Quod lacerum corpus medicâ sanaverit arte,  
Hippolytum Stygiis et revocarit aquis,  
Ad Stygias ipse est raptus Epidaurius undas;  
Sic pretium vitæ mors fuit artificii.  
Tu quoque dum toto laniatam corpore Romam  
Componis miro, Raphael, ingenio  
Atque urbis lacerum ferro, igne, armisque cadaver  
Ad vitam antiquum jam revocasque decus,  
Movisti Superum invidiam; indignataque mors est  
Te dudum extinctis reddere posse animam,  
Et quod longa dies paullatim aboleverat, hoc te  
Mortali spretâ lege parare iterum.  
Sic miser heu primâ cadis intercepte juventâ:  
Debere et morti nostraque nosque mones.

Baldassare Castiglione.

<sup>38</sup> See Benvenuto Cellini, i. 31.

Florence had carved statues in the classic manner; nor are the arabesques of Signorelli at Orvieto, of Perugino at Perugia, less fanciful than those of Raphael in the Loggi. What really happened was that the imitation of the ancients grew more puristic and precise through the formation of a common taste that imposed itself with the weight of authority on artists. Giulio Romano's Palazzo del Te at Mantua may be cited as the most perfect production of this epoch, combining, as it does, all forms of antique decoration and construction with the vivid individuality of genius. Giulio Romano comprehended the antique, and followed it with the enthusiasm of a neophyte. But his very defects prevented him from falling into the frigid formalism of Palladio.

The causes of Roman pre-eminence in this last age of humanism are not far to seek. By the policy of Alexander and Julius the Papal See had become the chief power in Italy. Venice never publicly encouraged literature, nor was the ambition of her nobles fixed on anything so much as the aggrandisement of the Republic. In the beginning of the sixteenth century their energy was needed no longer for the extension of Venetian rule, but for its preservation under the attack of Europe leagued against the city of the sea. Florence, divided between the parties of the Piagnoni and the Ottimati, reserved her failing vigour for the great struggle of 1529. The Medici, after absorbing what remained of mental force into their own circle, had transferred the Florentine traditions of culture with Giovanni and Giulio to Rome. At Naples the Aragonese dynasty had been already shaken to its foundation by the conspiracy of the Barons and by the conquest of Charles VIII. Ferdinand the Catholic and Louis XII. were now intent upon dividing the southern provinces of Italy between them. Little opportunity was left, if inclination had remained, for patronising men of letters at a Court suspicious of its aristocracy and terrified by foreign interference. Milan, first among the towns of Lombardy, was doomed to bear the brunt of French, and Swiss, and German armies. To maintain the semblance of their dukedom taxed the weakness of the Sforzas to the utmost, while the people groaned beneath the fiendish cruelty of Spanish governors. The smaller principalities had been destroyed by Cesare Borgia and Julius. Ferrara, Mantua, and Urbino, at the beginning of the century, alone continued the traditions of the previous age. Rome, meanwhile, however insecure the Papal rule might be, still ranked among the Powers of Europe, pursuing a policy on equal terms with France and Spain. In Rome money abounded; nor had the sacred city of Christendom felt as yet the scourge of war, that broke the spirit of the Northern capitals. It was but natural, therefore, that the political and intellectual energies of the Italians should find their centre here.

Sad times, however, were in store for Rome. When Leo's successor read the Latin letters of the Apostolic secretaries, he cried, '*Sunt litteræ unius poetæ*;' and after walking through the Belvedere Gallery, he gave vent to his feelings in the famous exclamation, '*Sunt idola antiquorum*.'

The humanists had nothing to expect from such a master. The election of Giulio de' Medici restored the hope that Rome might once more be as it had been beneath the sway of Leo. Yet for Clement VII. was reserved the final bitterness of utter ruin. In the fourth year of his papacy happened the catastrophe that closed one period of Italian history, and opened a new era for Rome and for the nation. The tale of the sack has been already told.<sup>39</sup> A fitting conclusion for this chapter may be found in Valeriano's discourse upon its consequences to the literary society assembled by the Medici at the Papal Court.

Valeriano's dialogue 'De Literatorum Infelicitate' opens with a description of Rome in the pontificate of Leo.<sup>40</sup> Never since the downfall of the Empire, he says, had letters flourished so freely or had men of learning found more generous patronage. Of that brilliant company Valeriano was himself an ornament. The friend of Egidius and the favourite of Leo, he spent his time in the composition of Latin poems, panegyric and satiric, and in the exploration of antiquities. Afterwards he became the protonotary of Clement, and supervised the education of the Medicean bastards Alessandro and Ippolito. His good fortune carried him to Piacenza in the fatal year of 1527. On his return to Rome after the siege, he looked in vain for his old comrades and associates. 'Good God!' he exclaims in the dialogue before us, 'when first I began to inquire for the philosophers, orators, poets, and professors of Greek and Latin literature, whose names were written on my tablets, how great, how horrible a tragedy was offered to me! Of all those lettered men whom I had hoped to see, how many had perished miserably, carried off by the most cruel of all fates, overwhelmed by undeserved calamities: some dead of plague, some brought to a slow end by penury in exile, others slaughtered by a foeman's sword, others worn out by daily tortures; some, again, and these of all the most unhappy, driven by anguish to self-murder.' John Goritz, captured by his countrymen, had ransomed himself with the sacrifice of all his wealth, and now was dying of despair at Verona. Colocci had seen his house, with its museums and MSS., burned before his eyes. Angelo Cesi, maltreated by the Spanish soldiers on a sick bed, died of his injuries before the year was out. Marone, the brilliant improvisatore, stripped of everything and deprived of his poems, the accumulated compositions of years spent in Leo's service, breathed his last in a miserable tavern. Marco Fabio Calvi, Raphael's friend and teacher, succumbed to sickness in a hospital. Julianus Camers, maddened by the sight of the torments inflicted on his servants, had thrown himself from a window in his house, and was killed. Baldus, the professor, after watching his commentary upon Pliny used to light the camp fires of the soldiery, had died himself of hunger. Casanova, the poet, fell a victim to the plague. Paolo Bombasi, another poet, was murdered in the streets of Rome. Cristo-

<sup>39</sup> Vol. I., *Age of Despots*, App. V.

<sup>40</sup> Printed at Venice, 1620.

foro Marcella had been tortured by the Spaniards. Exposed naked on a tree, his nails were daily drawn from his fingers by these human fiends; he only escaped their clutches to die of his injuries at Gaeta. Laomedon Tardolus and John Bonifacius Victor suffered similar indignities and torments. Francesco Fortunio and John Valdes slew themselves. To enumerate all the scholars who succumbed to fear, plague, famine, torture, and imprisonment in this fatal year; to relate how numbers left Rome, robbed of everything, to wander over Italy, and die of hunger by the wayside, or of fever in low hovels; to describe the losses of their MSS., their madness, beggary, mysterious disappearances and deaths by hands of servants or of brigands on the high roads, would occupy more space than I have left at my command. The ghastly muster roll is told with terrible concision by Valeriano, who adds divers examples, unconnected with the sack, of early deaths by over-study, lingering illnesses, murders by poison or the knife, and accidents of every kind, attributable more or less directly to the shifting career of students at that time in Italy.

Though the wars in Lombardy proved scarcely less fatal to men of letters than the siege of Rome, those disasters fell singly and at intervals. The ever-memorable stage of the Eternal City was reserved for the crowning tragedy of arts and letters. Whatever vicious seeds had been sown in Italy by the humanists had blossomed and borne fruit in Rome; and there the Nemesis of pride and insolence, and godlessness of evil living, fell upon them like a bolt from heaven. In essays, epistles, and funeral orations, they amply recognised the justice of their punishment. A phrase of Hieronymus Niger's in a letter to Sadoletto—'Rome, that is the sink of all things shameful and abominable'—might serve as the epitome of their conscience-stricken Jeremiads.<sup>41</sup> All Italy re-echoed with these lamentations; and though Clement VII. and Paul III. did their best to repiece the ruins of Leo's golden house of fame, the note of despair and anguish uttered by the scholars in 1527 was never destined to be drowned by chorus hymeneal or triumphal chant again. What remained of humanism among the Italians assumed a different form, adapted to the new rule of the Spaniards and the new attitude of the Church. To the age of the Humanists succeeded the age of the Inquisitors and Jesuits.

<sup>41</sup> 'Quod Romæ, hoc est in sentinâ omnium rerum atrocium et pudendarum deprehenso fuerimus.' Quoted by Gregorovius, *Stadt Rom*, vol. viii. p. 598, note 3.



## CHAPTER VIII

### LATIN POETRY

*Special Causes for the Practice of Latin Versification in Italy—The Want of an Italian Language—Multitudes of Poetasters—Beccadelli—Alberti's 'Philodoxus'—Poliziano—The 'Sylve'—'Nutricia,' 'Rusticus,' 'Manto,' 'Ambra'—Minor Poems—Pontano—Sannazzaro—Elegies and Epigrams—Christian Epics—Vida's 'Christiad'—Vida's 'Poetica'—Frascatore—The 'Syphilis'—Barocco Flatteries—Bembo—Immoral Elegies—Imitations of Ovid and Tibullus—The 'Benacus'—Epitaphs—Navagero—Epigrams and Eclogues—Molsa—Poem on his Own Death—Castiglione—'Alcon' and 'Lycidas'—Verses of Society—The Apotheosis of the Popes—Poem on the Ariadne of the Vatican—Sadolet's Verses on the Laocoon—Flaminio—His Life—Love of the Country—Learned Friends—Scholar-Poets of Lombardy—Extinction of Learning in Florence—Decay of Italian Erudition.*

THE history of this last period of the Revival would be incomplete without a survey of its Latin poetry. I shall have failed to convey a right notion of the tendencies of humanism, if I have not shown that the Italians were seeking not merely to acquire a knowledge of ancient literature, but also to effect a resuscitation of antiquity in their own writings. Regarding themselves as the heirs of Rome, separated from the brilliant period of Latin civilisation by ten centuries of ignorance, they strove with all their might to seize the thread of culture at the very point where the poets of the Silver Age had dropped it. In the opinion of Northern races it might seem unnatural or unpatriotic to woo the Muses in a dead language; but for Italians the *Camœnæ* had not died; on the hills of Latium, where they fell asleep, they might awake again. Every familiar sight and sound recalled 'the rich Virgilian rustic measure' of the 'Georgics' and 'Bucolics.' Nature had not changed, nor did the poets feel the influence of Christianity so deeply as to find no meaning in the mythic phraseology of Fauns and Nymphs.

Latin, again, was far less a language of the past for the Italians than for other European nations. What risk the Tuscan dialect ran, when Dante wrote the first lines of the 'Divine Comedy,' in Latin, and when Petrarch assumed the laurel crown by right of his 'Africa,' is known to every student. The serious efforts of the greatest writers were for centuries devoted to Latin composition, because they believed that the nation, in the modern as in the ancient world, might freely use the speech of Cicero and Virgil. Their *volgari cose* they despised as trifles, not having calculated the impotence of scholars or of kings to turn the streams of language from their natural courses. Nor was this blindness so inexplicable as it seems to us at first sight. Italy possessed no com-

mon dialect; Dante's 'Italiano Illustre,' or 'Cortegiano,' was even less native to the race at large, less universal in its use, than Latin.<sup>1</sup> Fashioned from the Tuscan for literary purposes, selected from the vocabulary of cultivated persons, stripped of vernacular idioms, and studied in the works of a few standard authors, it was itself, upon the soil that gave it birth, a product of high art and conscious culture. The necessity felt soon after Dante's death for translating the 'Divine Comedy' into Latin, sufficiently proves that a Latin poem gained a larger audience than the masterpiece of Italian literature. While the singer of a dialect, however noble, appealed to his own fellow-citizens, the Latin poet gave his verses *urbi et orbi*. If another proof of the artificiality of Italian were needed, we should find it in the fact that the phrases of Petrarch are not less obsolete now than in the fourteenth century. The English require a glossary for Chaucer, and even Elizabethan usages are out of date; in other words, the language of the people has outgrown the style of its first poets. But Italian has undergone no process of transformation and regeneration according to the laws of organic growth, since it first started. The different districts still use different dialects, while writers in all parts of the peninsula have conformed their style as far as possible to early Tuscan models. It may be questioned whether united Italy, having for the first time gained the necessary conditions of national concentration, is not now at last about to enter on a new phase of growth in literature, which, after many years, will make the style of the first authors more archaic than it seems at present.

The foregoing observations were requisite in order to explain why the cultivation of Latin poetry was no mere playwork to Italian scholars. The peculiar direction given by Petrarch to classical studies at the outset must also be taken into account. We have seen that he regarded rhetoric and poetry as the two chief aims of humanism. To be either a poet or an orator was the object of all students who had slaked their thirst at the Castalian springs of ancient learning. Philology and poetry, accordingly, went hand in hand through the periods of the Revival; and to this first impulse we are perhaps justified in tracing back the prominence assigned to Latin verse in our own school studies.

Poetry being thus regarded as a necessary branch of scholarship, it followed that few men distinguished for their learning abstained from versification. Pedants who could do no more than make prosaic elegiacs scan, and scholars respectable for their acquirements, but destitute of inspiration, were reckoned among the *sacri vates*. It would be a weariful—nay, hopeless—task to pass all the Latin versifiers of the Renaissance in review. Their name is legion; even to count them would be the same as to number the stars—*ad una ad una annoverar le stelle*. It may be considered fortunate that perhaps the larger masses of their productions still remain in manuscript, partly because they preceded

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Filelfo, quoted in a note to the next chapter, who says, "Tuscan is hardly known to all Italians, while Latin is spread far and wide throughout the whole world."

the age of printing, and partly, no doubt, because the good sense of the age rejected them. What has been printed, however, exceeds in bulk the 'Corpus Poetarum Latinorum,' and presents so many varieties that to deal with more than a selection is impossible.<sup>2</sup>

The poetasters of the first two periods need not be taken into account. Struggling with a language imperfectly assimilated, and with the rules of a prosody as yet but little understood, it was as much as they could do to express themselves at all in metre. Elegance of composition was out of the question when a writer could neither set forth modern thoughts with ease nor imitate the classic style with accuracy. What he lost in force by the use of a dead language, he did not gain in polish; nor was the taste of the age schooled to appreciate the niceties of antique diction. Beccadelli alone, by a certain limpid fluency, attained to a degree of moderate excellence; and how much he owed to his choice of subject may be questioned. The obscenity of his themes, and the impudence required for their expression, may have acted as a stimulus to his not otherwise distinguished genius. There is, moreover, no stern conflict to be fought with phrases when the author's topic is mere animalism. The rest of his contemporaries, Filelfo included, did no more than smooth the way for their successors by practising the technicalities of verse and exciting emulation. To surpass their rude achievements was not difficult, while the fame they enjoyed aroused the ambition of younger rivals. Exception to this sweeping verdict may be made in favour of Alberti, whose Latin play, called 'Philodoxus,' was a brilliant piece of literary workmanship.<sup>3</sup> Not only did it impose on contemporaries as a genuine classic, but, even when judged by modern standards, it shows real familiarity with the language of Latin comedy and rare skill in its employment.

Poliziano is the first Latin poet who compels attention in the fifteenth century; nor was he surpassed, in fertility of conception and mastery of metre, by any of his numerous successors. With all his faults of style and crudities of diction, Poliziano, in my opinion, deserves the chief place among original poets of revived Latin literature. Bembo wrote more elegantly, Navagero more classically, Amalteo with a grace more winning. Yet these versifiers owe their celebrity to excellence of imitation. Poliziano possessed a manner of his own, and made a dead language utter thoughts familiar to the age in which he lived. He did not merely traverse the old ground of the elegy, the epigram, the satire, and the idyll. Striking out a new path for himself, and aiming at instruction, he poured forth torrents of hexameters, rough perhaps and

<sup>2</sup> I purpose in this chapter to use the *Delitia Poetarum Italorum*, two parts divided into 4 vols., 1608; *Carmina Quinque Illustrium Poetarum*, Bergomi, 1753; *Poemata Selecta Italorum*, Oxonii, 1808; and *Selecta Poemata Italorum*, accorante A. Pope, Londini, 1740.

<sup>3</sup> Bonucci's edition of Alberti's works, vol. i. Alberti's own preface, in the form of a dedicatory letter to Lionello d'Este, describes how he came to write this comedy, and how it was passed off upon contemporaries as an original play by Lepidus Comicus. *Ib.* pp. cxxi-cxxiii.

over-fluent, yet marked by intellectual energy and copious fancy, in illustration of a modern student's learning. This freedom of handling is shown to best advantage in his *'Sylvæ.'*<sup>4</sup>

The *'Nutricia'* forms an introduction to the history of poetry in general, and carries on its vigorous stream the weight of universal erudition. From it we learn how the most accomplished scholar of his century judged and distinguished the whole body of fine literature possessed by his contemporaries. On the emergence of humanity from barbarism, writes Poliziano, poetry was given to men as a consolation for the miseries of life and as an instrument of culture; their first nurse in the cradle of civilisation was the Muse:—

Musa quies hominum, divomque æterna voluptas.<sup>5</sup>

After characterising the Pagan oracles, the mythical bards of Hellas, and the poet-prophets of the Jewish race, with brief but telling touches, Poliziano addresses himself in the following lines to the delineation of the two chief epic-singers:—

. . . . etenim ut stellas fugere unduque cælo,  
Aurea cum radios Hyperionis exeruit fax,  
Cernimus, et tenuem velut evanescere lunam;  
Sic veterum illustres flagranti obscurat honores  
Lampade Mæonides: unum quem dia canentem  
Facta virum, et sævas æquantem pectine pugnas,  
Obstupuit, prorsusque pacem confessus Apollo est.  
Proximus huic autem, vel ni veneranda senectus  
Obstitit, fortasse prior, canit arma virumque  
Vergilius, cui rure sacro, cui gramine pastor  
Ascræus, Siculusque simul cessere volentes.<sup>6</sup>

Then follows the enumeration of lesser Greek and Roman epopœists. After them the lyrists and elegiac poets, among whom Pindar is celebrated in the following magniloquent paragraph:—

Aërios procul in tractus, et nubila supra  
Pindarus it Diræus olor, cui nectare blandæ  
Os tenerum libâstis apes, dum fessa levaret  
Membra quiete puer mollem spirantia somnum;  
Sed Tanagræa suo mox jure poetria risit,  
Irrita qui toto sereret figmenta canistro;  
Tum certare auso palmam intercepit opimam  
Æoliis prælata modis atque illicce formâ.

<sup>4</sup> See above, p. 490, for the purpose fulfilled by the *Sylvæ*.

<sup>5</sup> 'Of men the solace, and of gods the everlasting joy.'

<sup>6</sup> 'As from the heavens we see the stars on all sides fleeing, when the golden torch of the sun-god rises, and the diminished moon appears to fade; so with his burning lamp Mæonides obscures the honours of the earlier bards. Him alone, while he sang the divine deeds of heroes, and with his lyre arrayed fierce wars, Apollo, wonder-struck, confessed his equal. Close at his side, or higher even, but for the veneration due to age, Vergil entones the song of arms and the hero—Vergil, to whom from holy tilth and pasture land both Ascræ's and Sicilia's shepherds yield their sway with willing homage.'—*Quinque Illustrium Poetarum Carmina*, p. 167.

Ille Agathocleâ subnisi voce coronas  
 Dixit Olympicas, et quâ victoribus Isthmos  
 Fronde comam, Delphique tegant, Nemeæaque tesqua  
 Lunigenam mentita feram; tum numina divum  
 Virtutesque, virosque undanti pectore torrens  
 Provenit, sparsitque pios ad funera questus.  
 Frugibus hunc libisque virum Cirrhæus ab arâ  
 Phœbus, et accubitu mensæ dignatus honore est:  
 Panaque pastores solis videre sub antris  
 Pindarico tacitas mulcentem carmine silvas.  
 Inde senem pueri gremio cervice repostâ  
 Infusum, et dulci laxantem corda sopore,  
 Protinus ad manes, et odore gramine pictum  
 Elysium tacitâ rapuit Proserpina dextrâ.  
 Quin etiam hostiles longo post tempore flammæ,  
 Quæ septemgeminas populabant undique Thebas,  
 Expavere domum tanti tamen urere vatis,  
 Et sua posteritas medios quoque tuta per enses  
 Sensit inexhaustâ cinerem juvenescere famâ.<sup>7</sup>

Sappho is described in the following lines:—

lyricis jam nona poetis  
 Æolis accedit Sappho, quæ flumina propter  
 Pierias legit ungue rosas, unde implicitæ audax  
 Serta Cupido sibi, niveam quæ pectine blando  
 Cyrinnem, Megaramque simul, cumque Atthide pulchram  
 Cantat Anactorien, et crinigeram Telesippen;  
 Et te conspicuum recidivo flore juventæ  
 Miratur revocatque, Phaon, seu munera vectæ  
 Puppe tuâ Veneris, seu sic facit herba potentem:  
 Sed tandem Ambracias temeraria saltat in undas.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> 'Far off into the tracts of air and high above the clouds soars Pindar, the Dircæan swan, whose tender mouth ye gentle bees with nectar fed, while the boy gave rest to weary limbs that breathed soft slumber. But him the maid of Tanagra derided, what time she told him that he sowed his myths from the whole sack to waste; and when he dared contend with her in song, she bore away the victor's palm, triumphant by Æolian moods, and by her seductive beauty too. He with his mighty voice, trained in the school of Agathocles, sang the crowns of Olympia and the garlands wherewith the Isthmus and Delphi, and the Nemean wastes that falsely claimed the moon-born monster, shade the athlete's brows. Then, like a torrent, with swelling soul, he passed to celebrate the powers and virtues of the gods and heroes, and poured forth pious lamentations for the dead. Him Phœbus, lord of Cirrha, honoured with food and drink from his altar, and made him guest-fellow at his own board: shepherds too saw Pan in lonely caverns charming the woods with a Pindaric song. At last, when he was old and lay with his neck reclined upon the bosom of the boy he loved, soothing his soul in sleep, Proserpina with still right hand approached and took him straight to join the shades and pace Elysium's fragrant meads. Nay, more: long afterwards, the foe-man's flames, which laid seven-gated Thebes in ruins far and wide, these flames dared not to burn so great a poet's house; and his descendants, safe 'mid a thousand swords, learned that his ashes still were young through fame that lives for aye.'—*Carmina*, &c. p. 173.

<sup>8</sup> 'Ninth among lyric bards, Æolian Sappho joins the crew; she who by flowing water plucks Pieria's rose for venturous Love to twine in wreaths for his own brow; who with her dulcet lyre sings fair Cyrinna's charms, and Megara, and Atthis and sweet Anactoria, and Telesippa of the flowing hair. And thee, too, Phaon, beautiful in youth's rathe flower, on thee she gazes, thee she calls again; such power to thee gave Venus for her freightage in thy skiff, or else the herb of love. Yet at the last, not wisely bold, she leaps into the Ambracian waves.' *Ib.* &c. p. 175.

Having disposed of the lyrists, Poliziano proceeds to the dramatic poets. His brief notice of the three Attic tragedians is worthy of quotation, if only because it proves what we should suspect from other indications, that the best scholars of the earlier Renaissance paid them little attention. The facts mentioned in the following lines seem to be derived from the gossip of Athenæus:—

Æschylus<sup>9</sup> aëriæ casu testudinis ictus,  
Quemque senem meritæ rapuerunt gaudia palmæ,  
Quemque tegit rapidis lacerum pia Pella molossis.<sup>9</sup>

Nor are his observations on the comic dramatists less meagre.<sup>10</sup> The Roman poets having been passed in the same rapid review, Poliziano salutes the founders of Italian literature in the following fine passage:—

Nec tamen aligerum fraudarim hoc munere Dantem,  
Per Styga, per stellas, medique per ardua montis  
Pulchra Beatricis sub virginis ora volantem:  
Quique Cupidineum repetit Petrarcha triumphum:  
Et qui bis quinis centum argumenta diebus  
Pingit, et obscuri qui semina monstrat amoris:  
Unde tibi immensæ veniunt præconia laudis,  
Ingeniis opibusque potens Florentia mater.<sup>11</sup>

The transition to Lorenzo at this point is natural. A solemn peroration in praise of the Medicean prince, himself a poet, whose studies formed the recreation of severer labours, ends the composition. This is written in Poliziano's best style, and, though it is too long to quote, six lines may be selected as indicating the theme of the argument:—

Quodque alii studiumque vocant durumque laborem,  
Hic tibi ludus erit; fessus civilibus actis  
Huc is emeritas acuens ad carmina vires:  
Felix ingenio, felix cui pectore tantas  
Instaurare vices, cui fas tam magna pacaci  
Alternare animo, et varias ita nectere curas.<sup>12</sup>

We possess the whole of Poliziano in the 'Nutricia.' It displays the energy of intellect that carried him on bounding verse through the in-

<sup>9</sup> 'Æschylus, smitten by a tortoise falling from the air above his head, and he whose triumph, justly won in old age, killed him with excess of joy, and he whose body, torn by raging hounds, the reverent earth of Pella hides.'—*Carmina*, &c. p. 176.

<sup>10</sup> *Ib.* p. 177.

<sup>11</sup> 'Nor yet of this meed of honour would I cheat wing-bearing Dante, who flew through hell, through the starry heavens, and o'er the intermediate hill of purgatory beneath the beauteous brows of Beatrice; and Petrarch too, who tells again the tale of Cupid's triumph; or him who in ten days portrays a hundred stories, and lays bare the seeds of hidden love: from whom unmeasured fame and name are thine, by wit and wealth twice potent, Florence, mother of great sons!'—*Ib.* p. 178.

<sup>12</sup> 'What other men call study and hard toil, that for thee shall be pastime; wearied with deeds of state, to this thou hast recourse, and dost address the vigour of thy well-worn powers to song: blest in thy mental gifts; blest to be able thus to play so many parts, to vary thus the great cares of thy all-embracing mind, and weave so many divers duties into one.'—*Carmina*, &c. p. 179.

tricacies of a subject difficult by reason of its scope and magnitude. All his haste is here, his inability to polish or select, his lava-stream of language hurrying the dross of prose and scoræ of erudition along a burning tide of song. His memory held, as it were, in solution all the matter of antique literature; and when he wrote, he poured details forth in torrents, combining them with critical remarks, for the double purpose of instruction and panegyric. Taken at the lowest valuation by students to whom his copious stores of knowledge are familiar, the vivid and continuous melody of his leaping hexameters places the 'Nutricia' above the lucubrations of more fastidious Latinists. We must also remember that, when it was recited from the professorial Chair of Rhetoric at Florence, the magnetism of Poliziano's voice and manner supplied just that touch of charm the poem lacks for modern readers; nor was the matter so hackneyed at the end of the fifteenth century as it is now. Lilius Gyraldus, subjecting the 'Sylvæ' to criticism at a time when Latin poetry had been artistically polished by the best wits of the age of Leo, passed upon them a judgment which may even now be quoted as final.<sup>13</sup> 'Poliziano's learning was marvellous, his genius fervent and well-trained, his reading extensive and uninterrupted; yet he appears to have composed his verses with more heat than art, using too little judgment both in the selection of his materials and in the correction of his style. When, however, you read his 'Sylvæ,' the impression left upon your mind will be such that for the moment you will lack nothing.'

The second poem of the 'Sylvæ,' entitled 'Rusticus,' forms an induction to the study of bucolic poets, principally Hesiod and Virgil. It is distinguished by more originality and play of fancy than the 'Nutricia;' some of its delineations of landscape and sketches of country life compete not unfavourably with similar passages in the author's 'Stanze.' To dwell upon these beauties in detail, and to compare Poliziano, the Latin poet, with Poliziano, the Italian, would be a pleasant task. Yet I must confine myself to quoting the last, and in some respect the least imaginative, lines, for the sake of their historical interest. Careggi and Florence, Lorenzo and his circle of literary friends, rise before us in these verses:—

Talia Fesuleo lentus meditabar in antro,  
Rure suburbano Medicum, quâ mons sacer urbem  
Mæoniam, longique volumina despicit Arni:  
Quâ bonus hospitium felix placidamque quietam  
Indulget Laurens, Laurens haud ultima Phœbi  
Gloria, jactatis Laurens fida anchora Musis;  
Qui si certa magis permiserit otia nobis,  
Afflabor majore Deo, nec jam ardua tantum  
Silva meas voces, montanaque saxa loquentur,  
Sed tu, si qua fides, tu nostrum fortitan olim,  
O mea blanda alitrix, non aspernabere carmen,  
Quamvis magnorum genitrix Florentia vatum,  
Docta que me triplici recinet facundia lingua.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> 'Dialogues de Poetis nostri Temporis.' *Opp.* vol. ii. p. 388. Edition of Basle, 1580.

<sup>14</sup> 'On themes like these I spent my hours of leisure in the grottoes of Fiesole, at the



The third canto of the 'Sylvæ' is called 'Manto.' It relates the birth of Virgil, to whom the Muses gave their several gifts, while the Sibyl of Mantua foretold his future course of life and all the glories he should gain by song. The poem concludes with a rhetorical eulogy of Rome's chief bard, so characteristic of Renaissance enthusiasm for Virgil that to omit a portion of it from these pages would be to sacrifice one of the most striking examples of Italian taste in scholarship:—

At manet æternum, et seros excurrit in annos  
 Vatis opus, dumque in tacito vaga sidera mundo  
 Fulgebunt, dum sol nigris orietur ab Indis,  
 Prævia luciferis aderit dum curribus Eos,  
 Dum ver tristis hiems, autumnum proferet æstas,  
 Dumque fluet spirans refluatque reciproca Tethys,  
 Dum mixta alternas capient elementa figuras,  
 Semper erit magni decus immortale Maronis,  
 Semper inexhaustis ibunt hæc flumina venis,  
 Semper ab his docti ducentur fontibus haustus,  
 Semper odoratos fundent hæc gramina flores,  
 Unde piæ libetis apes, unde inclyta nectat  
 Serta comis triplici juvenalis Gratia dextrâ.<sup>15</sup>

Not less ingenious than the poem itself is the elegiac introduction. Poliziano feigns that when the Minyæ came to Cheiron's cave on Pelion, and supped with him, Orpheus sang a divine melody, and then the young Achilles took the lyre, and with rude fingers praised the poet's song. The Minyæ smiled, but Orpheus was touched by the boy-hero's praises. Even so will Maro haply take delight in mine:—

Finis erat dapibus; citharam pius excitat Orpheus,  
 Et movet ad doctas verba canora manus.  
 Contiguere viri, tenuere silentia venti,  
 Vosque retro cursum mox tenuistis aquæ.  
 Jam volucres fessis pendere sub æthera pennis,  
 Jamque truces videas ora tenere feras.  
 Decurrunt scopulis auritæ ad carmina quercus,  
 Nudaque Peliacus culmina motat apex.

Medicean villa, where the holy hill looks down upon the Mæonian city, and surveys the windings of the distant Arno. There good Lorenzo gives his friends a happy home and rest from cares; Lorenzo, not the last of Phœbus' glorious band; Lorenzo, the firm anchor of the Muses tempest-tost. If only he but grant me greater ease, the inspiration of a mightier god will raise my soul; nor shall the lofty woods alone and mountain rocks resound my words; but thou—such faith have I—thou too shalt sometime hear, kind nurse of mine, nor haply scorn my song, thou, Florence, mother of imperial bards and learned eloquence in three great tongues shall give me fame.' *Carmina*, &c. p. 196.

<sup>15</sup> 'Nay, but for everlasting lives our poet's work, abides, and goes forth towards the ages late in time. So long as in the silent firmament the stars shall shine; so long as day shall rise from sun-burned Ind; so long as Phosphor runs before the wheels of light; so long as gloomy winter leads to spring, and summer to autumn; while breathing ocean ebbs and flows by turns, and the mixed elements put on their changing shapes—so long, for ever, shall endure great Maro's fame, for ever shall flow these rivers from his unexhausted fount, for ever shall draughts of learning be drawn from these rills, for ever shall these meadows yield their perfumed flowers, to pasture holy bees, and give the youthful Graces garlands for their hair.'—*Carmina*, &c. p. 207.

Et jam materno permulserat omnia cantu,  
 Cum tacuit, querulam deposuitque fidem.  
 Occupat hanc audax, digitosque affringit Achilles,  
 Indoctumque rudi personat ore puer.  
 Materiam quæris? laudabat carmina blandi  
 Hospitis, et tantæ murmura magna lyre.  
 Riserunt Minyæ: sed enim tibi dicitur, Orpheu,  
 Hæc pueri pietas grata fuisse nimis.  
 Me quoque nunc magni nomen celebrare Maronis,  
 Si qua fides vero est, gaudet et ipse Maro.<sup>16</sup>

The fourth poem, bearing the name of 'Ambra,' forms a similar induction to the study of Homer. The youth of Homer is narrated, and how Achilles appeared to him, blinding him with the vision of his heroic beauty, and giving him the wand of Teiresias. Then follow descriptions of both 'Iliad' and 'Odyssey,' and a passage of high-flown panegyric the whole ending with these lines on Lorenzo's villa of Cajano:—

Et nos ergo illi gratâ pietate dicamus  
 Hanc de Pierio contextam flore coronam,  
 Quam mihi Cajas inter pulcherrima nymphas  
 Ambra dedit patriæ lectam de gramine ripæ;  
 Ambra mei Laurentis amor, quem corniger Umbro,  
 Umbro senex genuit domino gratissimus Arno,  
 Umbro suo tandem non erepturus ab alveo.<sup>17</sup>

Taking into consideration the purpose fulfilled by Poliziano's 'Sylvæ' in his professorial career, it is impossible to deny their merit. The erudition is borne with ease; it does not clog or overload the poet's impulse. The flattery of Lorenzo is neither fulsome nor unmerited. The verse flows strongly and majestically, though more variety of cadence in the hexameter may be desired. The language, in spite of repetitions and ill-chosen archaisms, is rich and varied; it has at least the charm of being the poet's own, not culled with scrupulous anxiety from one or two illustrious sources. Some of the pictures are delicately sketched, while the whole style produces the effect of eloquent and fervid improvisation. For fulness and rapidity of utterance, copious fancy, and

<sup>16</sup> 'Supper was over; Orpheus awakes the lyre, and sings a melody to suit the tune he plays. The men were silent; the winds hushed; the rivers held their waters back to hear; the birds hung motionless in air; and the wild beasts grew calm. From the cliffs the oaks run down with listening ears, and the top of Pelion nods his barren head. And now the bard had soothed the whole world with his mother's song; when he ceased from singing and put down the thrilling lyre. This bold Achilles seizes; he runs his fingers o'er the strings, and chaunts an untaught lay, the simple boy. What was his theme? you ask. He praised the singing of the gentle guest, the mighty murmurs of that lyre divine. The Minyæ laughed; but yet, so runs the tale, even all too sweet, Orpheus, to thee was the boy's homage. Just so my praise of mighty Maro's name, if faith be not a dream, gives joy to Maro's self.'—*Carmina*, &c. p. 197.

<sup>17</sup> 'We also, therefore, with glad homage dedicate to him this garland twined of Pieria's flowers, which Ambra, loveliest of Cajano's nymphs, gave to me, culled from meadows on her father's shores; Ambra, the love of my Lorenzo, whom Umbrone, the horned stream, begat—Umbrone, dearest to his master Arno, Umbrone, who now henceforth will never break his banks again.'—*Carmina*, &c. p. 224.

wealth of illustration, these four poems will bear comparison with Roman work of the Silver Age. The Florentines who crowded Poliziano's lecture-room must have felt as in the days of the Empire, when Statius declaimed his periods to a Roman audience, and the patrician critics clapped applause.<sup>18</sup>

Among Poliziano's minor poems it is enough to mention the elegiac couplets on some violets sent him by his mistress, the verses descriptive of a beautiful girl, and the lamentation for the wife of Sismondo della Stufa.<sup>19</sup> They illustrate the delicacy of his style and the freedom of his fancy in the treatment of occasional themes, and are far superior to his epigrams and epitaphs.<sup>20</sup> The numerous encomiastic elegies addressed to Lorenzo de' Medici and other patrons are wholly without value. Poliziano was a genuine poet. He needed the inspiration of true feeling or of lively fancy; on a tame occasion he degenerated into frigid baldness. Yet the satires on Mabilius, where spite and jealousy have stirred his genius, are striking for their volubility and pungency. A Roman imitator of Catullus in his brutal mood could not have produced abuse more flexible and nauseous. Taken altogether, Poliziano's Latin compositions display the qualities of fluency and abundance that characterise his Italian verses, though they have not the exquisite polish of the 'Giostra.' Their final merit consists in their spontaneity. No stylist of the age of Leo knew how to use the language of classic Rome with so much ease.

Jovianus Pontanus deserves a high place among the writers of Latin verse, whether we regard his didactic poems on astronomy and the cultivation of the orange, his epigrams, or the amorous elegies that, for their grace, may be compared almost with Ovid.<sup>21</sup> Even during his lifetime Pontanus became a classic, and after his death he was imitated by the most ambitious versifiers of the late Renaissance.<sup>22</sup> The beauty of South Italian landscape—Sorrento's orange gardens and Baiæ's waters—passed into the fancy of the Neapolitan poets, and gave colour to their language. Nor was Pontanus, in spite of his severe studies and gravely-tempered mind, dead to the seductions of this siren. What we admire in Sannazzaro's 'Arcadia' assumes the form of pure Latinity in his love poems.<sup>23</sup> Their style is penetrated with the feeling for physical beauty, Pagan and untempered by an afterthought of Christianity. Their vigorous and glowing sensuality finds no just analogue except in some Venetian paintings. It was not, however, by his lighter verses so

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Juvenal, *Satire*, i. 9-14; vii. 81-87. Persius, *Satire*, i. 79-82. And cf. Petronius Arbiter for a detailed picture of these Roman recitations.

<sup>19</sup> *Carmina Quinque*, &c. pp. 250, 272, 276.

<sup>20</sup> The epitaphs on Giotto, Lippo Lippi, the fair Simonetta, and others, are only valuable for their historic interest, such as that is.

<sup>21</sup> I shall quote from his *Collected Poems*, Aldus, 1513.

<sup>22</sup> See the Elegy of Sannazzaro on the writings of Pontanus, *Poemata Selecta*, pp. 1-4 and Fracastoro's *Syphilis*, *ib.* p. 72.

<sup>23</sup> *Delitiae Poetarum Italarum*, pt. ii. pp. 668-712. Specimens may also be read in the *Poemata Selecta Italarum*, pp. 1-24.

much as by the five books called 'De Stellis' or 'Urania' that Pontanus won the admiration of Italian scholars. In this long series of hexameters he contrived to set forth the whole astronomical science of his age, touching upon the mythology of the celestial signs, describing the zodiac, discussing the motion of the heavens, raising the question of planetary influences, and characterising the different regions of the globe by their relation to the sun's path across the sky. He seems to have taken the 'Metamorphoses' of Ovid for his model of versification; and though we miss the variety of Ovid's treatment, great ingenuity is displayed in adorning so difficult a subject with poetical episodes.<sup>24</sup> Personal interest is added to the conclusion of 'Urania' by the lamentation poured forth for his daughter Lucia by the poet:—

Ornabam tibi sarta domi; Syriumque liquorem  
Ad thalamos geminæ, geminæ, tua cura, sorores  
Fundebant. Quid pro sertis Syrioque liquore  
Liquisti? Sine sole dies, sine sidere noctes,  
Insomnes noctes.<sup>25</sup>

Lucia died before her marriage-day, and her grey-headed father went mourning for her, fooled by memory, vainly seeking the joy that could not come again. Had she become, he asks, a star in heaven, and did the blessed gods and heroines enjoy her splendour? No voice replied when he called into the darkness, nor did new constellations beam on him with brightness from his daughter's eyes. All through the wakeful night he mourned, but when dawn went forth he marked a novel lustre on the sea and in the sky. Lucia had been added to the nymphs of morning. She smiled upon her father as she fled before the wheels of day; and now the sun himself arose, and in his light her light was swallowed: Hyperion scaled the heights of heaven with more than his own glory. With this apotheosis of his daughter, so curiously Pagan in feeling, and yet so far from classical in taste, the poem might have ended, had not Pontano reserved its final honours for himself. To Lucia, now made a goddess, he addresses his prayers that she should keep his name and fame alive on earth when he is dead:—

Fama ipsa assistens tumulo cum vestibis aureis,  
Ore ingens, ac voce ingens, ingentibus alis,  
Per populos late ingenti mea nomina plausu  
Vulgabit, titulosque feret per sæcula nostros;  
Plaudentesque meis resonabunt laudibus auræ,  
Vivet et extento celebr Jovianus in ævo.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> See, for instance, the tale of Hylas, lib. v. p. 103; the tale of Cola Pesce, lib. iv. p. 79; the council of the gods, lib. i. p. 18; the planet Venus, lib. i. p. 5.

<sup>25</sup> Lib. v. pp. 105-108. 'For thee I hung the house with wreaths; and thy twin sisters poured forth Syrian perfumes at the marriage chamber. What for our garlands and our perfumes hast thou left? Days without light, nights without a star, long sleepless nights.'

<sup>26</sup> 'Fame herself, seated by my tomb with golden raiment, mighty-mouthed, mighty-voiced, with mighty wings, shall spread abroad among the people my names with mighty sound of praise, and carry through the centuries my titles, and with my glory shall resound applauding airs of heaven; renowned through everlasting ages Jovian shall live.'

Sannazzaro's own elegies on the joys of love and country life, the descriptions of his boyhood at Salerno, the praises of his Villa Mergilina, and his meditations among the ruins of Cumæ, are marked by the same characteristics. Nothing quite so full of sensual enjoyment, so soft, and so voluptuous can be found in the poems of the Florentine and Roman scholars. They deserve study, if only as illustrating the luxurious tone of literature at Naples. It was not by these lighter effusions, however, that Sannazzaro won his fame. The epic on the birth of Christ cost him twenty years of labour; and when it was finished, the learned world of Italy welcomed it as a model of correct and polished writing. At the same time the critics seem to have felt, what cannot fail to strike a modern reader, that the difficulties of treating such a theme in the Virgilian manner, and the patience of the stylist, had rendered it a masterpiece of ingenuity rather than a work of genius.<sup>27</sup> Sannazzaro's epigrams, composed in the spirit of bitterest hostility towards the Borgia family, were not less famous than his epic. Alfonso of Aragon took the poet with him during his campaign against the Papal force in the Abruzzi; and these satires, hastily written in the tent and by the camp-fire, formed the amusement of his officers. From the soldiers of Alfonso they speedily passed, on the lips of courtiers and scholars, through all the cities of Italy; nor is it easy to say how much of Lucrezia Borgia's legend may not be traceable to their brief but envenomed couplets. What had been the scandal of the camp acquired consistency in lines too pungent to be forgotten and too witty to remain unquoted.<sup>28</sup> As a specimen of Sannazzaro's style, the epigram on Venice may here be cited:—

Viderat Hadriacis Venetam Neptunus in undis  
 Stare urbem, et toto ponere jura mari:  
 Nunc mihi Tarpeias quantumvis, Jupiter, arces  
 Objice, et illa tui moenia Martis, ait:  
 Si Pelago Tybrim præfers, urbem aspice utramque;  
 Illam homines dices, hanc posuisse deos.<sup>29</sup>

I have already touched upon the Virgilianism of Sannazzaro's 'Partus Virginis'.<sup>30</sup> What the cold churches of Palladio are to Christian architecture, this frigid epic is to Christian poetry. Leo X. delighted to

<sup>27</sup> 'Lilius Gyraldus,' loc. cit. p. 384, writes about this epic, 'in quibus, ut sic dicam, statarius poeta videri potest. Non enim verborum volubilitate fertur, sed limatius quoddam scribendi genus consecatur, et lima indies atterit, ut de illo non ineleganter dictum illud Apellis de Protogene Pontanus usurpare solitus esset, eum manum de tabula tollere nescire.'

<sup>28</sup> See *Delicia Poetarum Italorum*, second part, pp. 713-761. The following couplet on the death of Cesare Borgia is celebrated:—

Aut nihil aut Cæsar vult dici Borgia; quidni?  
 Cum simul et Cæsar possit et esse nihil.

<sup>29</sup> 'When Neptune beheld Venice stationed in the Adriatic waters, and giving laws to all the ocean, "Now taunt me, Jupiter, with the Tarpeian rock and those walls of thy son Mars!" he cried. "If thou preferrest Tiber to the sea, look on both cities; thou wilt say the one was built by men, the other by gods."'

<sup>30</sup> See above, p. 512.

recognise the Gospel narrative beneath a fancy dress of mythological inventions, and to witness the triumph of classical scholarship in the holy places of the mediæval faith. To fuse the traditions of Biblical and secular antiquity was, as I have often said, the dream of the Renaissance. What Pico and Ficino attempted in philosophical treatises, the poets sought to effect by form. Religion, attiring herself in classic drapery, threw off the cobwebs of the Catacombs, and acquired the right of *petites entrées* at the Vatican. It did not signify that she had sacrificed her majesty to fashion, or that her tunic *à la mode antique* was badly made. Her rouge and spangles enchanted the scholarly Pontiff, who forthwith ordered Vida to compose the 'Christiad,' and gave him a benefice at Frascati in order that he might enjoy a poet's ease. Vida's epic, like Sannazzaro's, was not finished during the lifetime of Leo. Both the 'Christiad' and the 'Partus Virginis' reflected lustre on the age of Clement.

Vida won his first laurels in the field of didactic poetry. Virgilian exercises on the breeding of silkworms and the game of chess displayed his faculty for investing familiar subjects with the graces of a polished style.<sup>31</sup> Such poems, whether written in Latin, or, like the 'Api' of Rucellai, in Italian, gratified the taste of the Renaissance, always appreciative of form independent of the matter it invested. For a modern student Vida's metrical treatise in three books on the 'Art of Poetry' has greater interest, since it illustrates the final outcome of classic studies in the age of Leo. The 'Poetica' is addressed to Francis, Dauphin of France, in his Spanish prison:<sup>32</sup>—

Primus ades, Francisce; sacras ne despice Musas,  
Regia progenies, cui regum debita scepra  
Gallorum, cum firma annis accesserit ætas.  
Hæc tibi parva ferunt jam nunc solatia dulces;  
Dum procul a patriâ raptum, amplexuque tuorum,  
Ah dolor! Hispanis sors impia, detinet oris,  
Henrico cum fratre; patris sic fata tulerunt  
Magnanimi, dum fortunâ luctatur iniquâ.  
Parce tamen, puer, o lacrymis; fata aspera forsan  
Mitescent, aderitque dies lætissima tandem  
Post triste exilium patriis cum redditus oris  
Lætitiâ ingentem populorum, omnesque per urbes  
Accipies plausus, et lætas undique voces;  
Votaque pro reditu persolvent debita matres.  
Interea te Pierides comitentus; in altos  
Jam te Parnassi mecum aude attollere lucos.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>31</sup> *Bombycum; Libri duo. Scacchia, Ludus; Liber unus.* Pope's *Poemata Italorum*, vol. i. pp. 103-130; pp. 190-210. The former poem is addressed to Isabella Gonzaga, née D'Este.

<sup>32</sup> *Poemata Selecta*, pp. 207-266. It will be remembered that Francis I., after Pavia, gave his two sons as hostages to Charles V.

<sup>33</sup> 'Thou, Francis, art the first to answer to my call. Scorn not the sacred Muses, scion of a royal line, to whom the sceptre of the kings of Gallia in due season of maturity will pass. Their sweetness even now shall yield thee some slight solace, exiled from home and father-land by fate impetuous on the Spanish shore, thee and thy brother Henry. So the fortunes of thy mighty-hearted father willed, condemned to strive a-

After this dedication Vida describes the solace to be found in poetry, and adds some precepts on the preparation of the student's mind.<sup>34</sup> A rapid review of the history of poetry—the decline of Greek inspiration after Homer, and of Latin after Virgil; the qualities of the Silver Age, and the Revival of letters under the Medici at Florence—serves to show how narrow the standard of Italian culture had become between the period of Poliziano, who embraced so much in his sketch of literature, and that of Vida, who confined himself to so little. The criticism is not unjust; but it proves that the refinement of taste by scholarship had resulted in restricting students to one or two models, whom they followed with servility.<sup>35</sup> Having thus established his general view of the poetic art, Vida proceeds to sketch a plan of education. The qualities and duties of a tutor are described; and here we may notice how far Vittorino's and Guarino's methods had created an ideal of training for Italy. The preceptor must above all things avoid violence, and aim at winning the affections of his pupil; it would be well for him to associate several youths in the same course of study, so as to arouse their emulation. He must not neglect their games, and must always be careful to suit his method to the different talents of his charges. When the special studies to be followed are discussed, Vida points out that Cicero is the best school of Latin style. He recommends the early practice of bucolic verse, and inculcates the necessity of treating youthful essays with indulgence. These topics are touched with more or less felicity of phrase and illustration; and though the subject-matter is sufficiently trite, the good sense and kindly feeling of the writer win respect. The first book concludes with a peroration on the dignity and sanctity of poets, a theme the humanists were never

gainst unequal doom. Yet spare thy tears: perchance hard fate will soften, and a day of supreme joy will come at last, when, after thy sad exile, once more given to thy nation, thou shalt behold thy country's gladness, and hear the shouts of all her cities and the ringing songs of happiness, and mothers shall perform their vows for thy return. Meanwhile let the maidens of Pieria attend thee; and, with me for guide, ascend into the groves of high Parnassus.'

tibi digna supellex  
Verborum rerumque paranda est, proque videnda  
Instant multa prius, quorum vatum indiget usus.

*Poemata Selecta*, p. 209.

<sup>35</sup> After mentioning the glories of Virgil, Vida adds:—

Sperare nefas sit vatibus ultra.  
Nulla mora, ex illo in pejus ruere omnia visa,  
Degenerare animi, atque retro res lapsa referri.  
Hic namque ingenio confusus posthabet artem;  
Ille furit strepitu, tenditque æquare tubarum  
Voce sonos, versusque tonat sine more per omnes;  
Dant alii cantus vacuos, et inania verba  
Incassum, solâ capti dulcedine vocis.

*Poemata Selecta*, p. 213. Cf. the advice (p. 214) to follow none but Virgil:—

Ergo ipsum ante alios animo venerare Maronem,  
Atque unum sequere, utque potes, vestigia serva.



weary of embroidering.<sup>36</sup> The second describes the qualities of a good poem, as these were conceived by the refined but formal taste of the sixteenth century. It should begin quietly, and manage to excite without satisfying the curiosity of the reader. Vain displays of learning are to be avoided. Episodes and similes must occur at proper intervals; and a frugal seasoning of humour will be found agreeable. All repetitions should be shunned, and great care should be taken to vary the narrative with picturesque descriptions. Rhetoric, again, is not unworthy of attention, when the poet seeks to place convenient and specious arguments in the mouths of his personages.

It is difficult in a summary to do justice to this portion of Vida's poem. His description of the ideal epic is indeed nothing more or less than a refined analysis of the 'Æneid;' and students desirous of learning what the Italians of the sixteenth century admired in Virgil will do well to study its acute and sober criticism. A panegyric of Leo closes the second book. From this peroration some lines upon the woes of Italy may be read with profit, as proving that the nation, conscious of its own decline, was contented to accept the primacy of culture in exchange for independence:—

Dii Romæ indigetes, Trojæ tuque auctor, Apollo  
Unde genus nostrum cœli se tollit ad astra,  
Hanc saltem auferri laudem prohibete Latinis:  
Artibus emineat semper, studiisque Minervæ,  
Italia, et gentes doceat pulcherrima Roma;  
Quandoquidem armorum penitus fortuna recessit,  
Tanta Italos inter crevit discordia reges;  
Ipsi nos inter sacros dstringimus enses,  
Nec patriam pudet externis aperire tyrannis.<sup>37</sup>

The third book treats of style and diction. To be clear and varied, to command metaphor and allusion, to choose phrases coloured by mythology and fancy, to suit the language to the subject, to vary the metrical cadence with the thought and feeling, and to be assiduous in the use of the file are mentioned as indispensable to excellence. A peroration on Virgil, sonorous and impassioned, closes the whole poem, which, rightly understood, is a monument erected to the fame of the Roman bard by the piety of his Italian pupil. The final lines are justly famous:—

O decus Italiæ! lux o clarissima vatum!  
Te colimus, tibiserta damus, tibi thura, tibi aras;

<sup>36</sup> Dona deûm Musæ: vulgus procul este profanum.

*Poemata Selecta*, p. 224; and again, *ib.* p. 226:—

Tu Jovis ambrosiis das nos accumbere mensis;  
Tu nos diis æquas superis, &c.

<sup>37</sup> 'Ye native gods of Rome! and thou, Apollo, Troy's founder! by whom our race is raised to heaven! let not at least this glory be withdrawn from Latium's children: may Italy for ever hold the heights of art and learning, and most beauteous Rome instruct the nations; albeit all success in arms be lost, so great hath grown the discord of Italia's princes. Yea, one against the other, we draw bloody swords, nor feel we any shame in calling foreign tyrants into our own land.'—*Poemata Selecta*, p. 245.

Et tibi rite sacrum semper dicemus honorem  
 Carminibus memores. Salve, sanctissime vates!  
 Laudibus augeri tua gloria nil potis ultra,  
 Et nostræ nil vocis eget; nos aspice præsens,  
 Pectoribusque tuos castis infunde calores  
 Adveniens, pater, atque animis te te inserte nostris.<sup>38</sup>

Vida's own intellect was clear, and his style perspicuous; but his genius was mediocre. His power lay in the disposition of materials and in illustration. A precise taste, formed on Cicero and Virgil, and exercised with judgment in a narrow sphere, satisfied his critical requirements. Virgil with him was first and last, and midst and without end. In a word, he shows what a scholar of sound parts and rhetorical aptitude could achieve by the study and imitation of a single author.

Since I have begun to speak of didactic poems, I may take this opportunity of noticing Fracastoro, who seems to have chosen Pontanus for his model, and, while emulating both Lucretius and Virgil, to have fallen short of Vida's elegance. His work is less remarkable for purity of diction than for massiveness of intellect, gravity of matter, and constructive ability. Jeronimo Fracastoro was born in 1483 at Verona, where he spent the greater portion of his life, enjoying high reputation as a physician, philosopher, astronomer, and poet. During his youth he studied under Pomponazzo at Padua. The strong tincture of materialistic science he there received, continued through life to colour his thought. Among modern Pagans none is more completely bare of Christianity than Fracastoro. As is well known, he chose the new and terrible disease of the Renaissance for his theme, and gave a name to it that still is current. To speak of Fracastoro's 'Syphilis,' dedicated to Bembo, hailed with acclamation by all Italy, preferred by Sannazzaro to his own epic, and praised by Julius Cæsar Scaliger as a 'divine poem,' is not easy now. The plague it celebrates appeared at Naples in 1495, and spread like wildfire over Europe, assuming at first the form of an epidemic sparing neither Pope nor king, and stirring less disgust than dread among its victims.<sup>39</sup> Whether the laws of its propagation were rightly understood in the sixteenth century is a question for physicians to decide. No one appears to have suspected that it differed in specific character from other pestilent disorders; and it is clear, both from contemporary chronicles and from Fracastoro's poem, that the *mal franzese*, as it was popularly called, suggested to the people of that age associations different from those that have since gathered round it. At the same time more formidable and less loathsome, it was a not more unworthy subject for verse than the plague at Athens described by

<sup>38</sup> 'Hail, light of Italy, thou brightest of the bards! Thee we worship, thee we adore with wreaths, with frankincense, with altars; to thee, as duty bids, for everlasting will we chaunt our holy hymns. Hail, consecrated bard! No increase to thy glory flows from praise, nor needs it voice of ours. Be near, and look upon thy votaries; come, father, and infuse thy fervour into our chaste hearts, and plant thyself within our souls.'—*Poemata Selecta*, p. 266.

<sup>39</sup> See Vol. I., *Age of the Despots*, p. 285, note.

Lucretius. Treating the disease, therefore, as a curse common to his generation, the scientific poet dared to set forth its symptoms, to prescribe remedies, to discuss the question of its origin, and to use it as an illustration of antagonistic forces, pernicious and beneficent, in the economy of nature. To philosophise his repulsive subject-matter was the author's ambition. His contemporaries admired the poetic graces with which he had contrived to adorn it.

The exordium of the first book states the problem. Whence came this new scourge of humanity? Not, surely, from America, though it is there indigenous. Its diffusion after the disasters of 1494 was too rapid to admit of this hypothesis.<sup>40</sup> To the corruption of the atmosphere must be referred the general invasion of the plague.<sup>41</sup> The theory of infected and putrescent air is stated in a long Lucretian passage, followed by a scientific account of the symptoms of syphilis. At this point the poet diversifies his argument by an episode, narrating the sad death of a young man born on the banks of the Oglio, and leading by gradual transitions to a peroration on the wars and woes of Italy.<sup>42</sup> Over all the poets of this age the miseries of their country hung like a cloud, and, touch the lyre as they may at the beginning of their song, it is certain ere the ending to give forth a dolorous groan. In the second book Fracastoro enters on the subject of remedies. He lays stress on choice of air, abundant exercise, avoidance of wine and heating diet, blood-letting, abstinence from sensual pleasures, fomentations, herbs, and divers minute rules of health. By attention to these matters the disease may be, if not shunned, at least mitigated. The sovereign remedy of quicksilver demanded fuller illustration; therefore the poet introduces the legendary episode of the shepherd Ilceus, conducted by the nymph Liparë to the sulphur founts and lakes of mercury beneath Mount Etna. Ilceus bathed, and was renewed in health. The rigorously didactic intention of Fracastoro is proved by the recipe for a mercurial ointment and the description of salivation that wind up this book.<sup>43</sup> The third opens with an allusion to the discovery of America, and a celebration of the tree Hyacus (Guaiacum). It is noticeable that, with such an opportunity for singing the praises of Columbus, Fracastoro passed him by, nor cared to claim for Italy a share in the greatest achievement of the century. Mingling myth with history, he next proceeds to tell how

<sup>40</sup> quoniam in primis ostendere multos  
Possumus, attactu qui nullius hanc tamen ipsam  
Sponte sua sensere luem, primique tulere.

*Poemata Selecta*, p. 67.

<sup>41</sup> Quumque animadvertas, tam vastæ semina labis  
Esse nec in terræ gremio, nec in æquore posse,  
Haud dubie tecum statuas reputesque necesse est,  
Principium sedemque mali consistere in ipso  
Aëre, qui terras circum diffunditur omnes.

*Ibid.* p. 69.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 79, 80.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 95, 96.

the Spaniards arrived in the West Indies, and shot birds sacred to the Sun,<sup>44</sup> one of which spoke with human voice, predicting the evils that would fall upon the crew for their impiety. Not the least of these was to be a strange and terrible disease. The natives of the islands flocked to meet the strangers, and some of them were tethered with a ghastly eruption. This leads to the episodical legend of the shepherd Syphilus, who dared to deride the Sun-god, and of the king Alcithous, who accepted divine honours in his stead. The Sun, to requite the insolence of Syphilus, afflicted him with a dreadful sickness. It yielded to no cure until the nymph Ammericö initiated him in the proper lustral rites, and led him to the tree Hyacus. The poem ends with a panegyric of Guaiacum.

I have sketched the subject of the 'Syphilis' in outline because of its importance not only for the neo-Latin literature of the Renaissance, but also for the history of medical opinion. As a didactic poem, it is constructed with considerable art; the style, though prosaic, is forcible, and the meaning is always precise. Falling short of classic elegance, Fracastoro may still be said to have fulfilled the requirements of Vida, and to have added something male and vigorous peculiar to himself. His adulatory verses to Alessandro Farnese, Paul III., and Julius III., might be quoted as curious examples of fulsome flattery conveyed in a *barocco* style. They combine Papal cant with Pagan mannerism, Virgilian and Biblical phraseology, masculine gravity of diction and far-fetched conceits, in a strange amalgam, as awkward as it is ridiculous.<sup>45</sup>

Another group of Latin versifiers, with Bembo at their head, cultivated the elegy, the idyll, and the ode. The authors of their predilection were Catullus, Propertius, and Tibullus. Abandoning the attempt to mould Christian or modern material into classic form, they frankly selected Pagan motives, and adhered in spirit as well as style to their models. Two elegiac poems of Bembo's, the 'Priapus' and the 'Faunus ad Nympeum Flumen,' may be cited as flagrant specimens of sixteenth-century licentiousness.<sup>46</sup> Polished language and almost faultless versification are wasted upon themes of rank obscenity. The 'Priapus,' translated and amplified in Italian *ottava rima*, gained a popular celebrity beyond the learned circles for whom it was originally written. We may trace its influence in many infamous Capitoli of the burlesque poets. Bembo excelled in elegiac verse. In a poem entitled, 'De Amicâ a Viro Servatâ,' he treated a characteristically Italian subject with

<sup>44</sup> These phrases he finds for a fowling-piece:—

Cava terrificis horrentia bombis  
Aera, et flammiferum tormenta imitantia fulmen.  
*Poemata Selecta*, p. 101.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. the passage about Alessandro Farnese's journeys—

Matre deâ comitante et iter monstrante nepoti—  
and the reformation in Germany. *Poemata Selecta*, p. 125. The whole idyll addressed to Julius III., *ib.* pp. 130-135, is inconceivably uncouth.

<sup>46</sup> *Carmina Quinque Illustrium Poetarum*, pp. 4 and 9-11.

something of Ovid's graceful humour.<sup>47</sup> A lover complains of living near his mistress, closely watched by her jealous husband. Here, as elsewhere, the morality is less to be admired than the versification; and that the latter, in spite of Bembo's scrupulous attention to metre, is not perfect, may be gathered from this line:—

Tunc quos nun habeo et quos sum olim habiturus amicos.

After reading hexameters so constructed we are tempted to shut the book with a groan, wondering how it was that a Pope's secretary and a prince of the Church should have thought it worth his while to compose a poem so injurious to his reputation as a moralist, or to preserve in it a verse so little favourable to his fame as a Latinist. More beautiful, because more true to classic inspiration, is the elegy of 'Galatea.'<sup>48</sup> the idyllic incidents suggest a series of pretty pictures for bas-reliefs or decorative frescoes in the manner of Albano. Bembo's masterpiece, however, in the elegiac metre, is a poem with 'De Galeso et Maximo' for its title.<sup>49</sup> It was composed, as the epigraph informs us, at the command of a great man at Rome; but whether that great man was also the greatest in Rome, and whether Maximus was another name for Leo, is matter of conjecture. The boy Galesus had wronged Maximus, his master. When reproved, he offered no excuses, called no witnesses, uttered no prayers to Heaven, indulged in no asseverations of innocence, shed no tears:—

Nil horum aggreditur; sed tantum ingrata loquentis  
Implicitus collo dulce pendit onus.  
Nec mora, cunctanti roseis tot pressa labellis  
Oscula cœlitibus invidiosa dedit,  
Arida quot levibus florescit messis aristis,  
Excita quot vernis floribus halet humus.  
Maxime, quid dubitas? Si te piget, ipse tuo me  
Pone loco: hæc dubitem non ego ferre mala.<sup>50</sup>

Bembo's talent lay in compositions of this kind. His verses, to quote the phrase of Gyraldus, were uniformly 'sweet, soft, and delicate.' When he attempted work involving more sustained effort of the intellect and greater variety of treatment, he was not so successful. His hexameter poem 'Benacus,' a description of the Lago di Garda, dedicated to Gian Matteo Giberti, reads like an imitation of Catullus without the

<sup>47</sup> *Ib.* pp. 18-23.

<sup>48</sup> *Carmina Quinque Illustrum Poetarum*, p. 7.

<sup>49</sup> *Ib.* p. 23.

<sup>50</sup> None of these things he tried; but only ran,  
And clasped with his sweet arms the angry man;  
Hung on his neck, rained kisses forth that Heaven  
Envied from those red lips to mortals given;  
In number like ripe ears of ruddy corn,  
Or flowers beneath the breath of April born.  
Still doubting, Maximus? Change place with me:  
Gladly I'd bear such infidelity.

Roman poet's grace of style or wealth of fancy.<sup>51</sup> Among Bembo's most perfect compositions may be reckoned his epitaphs on celebrated contemporaries. The following, written for Poliziano, deserves quotation.<sup>52</sup> Not only is the death of the scholar, following close upon that of his patron, happily touched, but the last line pays a proper tribute to Poliziano as an Italian poet:—

Duceret extincto cum mors Laurente triumphum,  
 Lætaque pullatis invehetur equis,  
 Respicit insano ferientem pollice chordas,  
 Viscera singultu concutiente, virum.  
 Mirata est, tenuitque jugum; furit ipse, pioque  
 Laurentem cunctos flagitat ore Deos:  
 Miscebat precibus lacrymas, lacrymisque dolorem;  
 Verba ministrabat liberiora dolor.  
 Risit, et antiquæ non immemor illa querelæ,  
 Orphei Tartaræ cum patuere viæ,  
 Hic etiam infernas tentat rescindere leges,  
 Fertque suas, dixit, in mea jura manus.  
 Protinus et flentem percussit dura poetam,  
 Rupit et in medio pectora docta sono.  
 Heu sic tu raptus, sic te mala fata tulerunt,  
 Arbiter Ausoniæ, Politiane, lyræ.<sup>53</sup>

More richly endowed for poetry than Bembo was his fellow-countryman Andrea Navagero. Few Latin versifiers of the Renaissance combined so much true feeling and fancy with a style more pure and natural. Some of his little compositions, half elegy, half idyll, have the grace and freedom of the Greek Anthology.<sup>54</sup> There is a simple beauty in their motives, while the workmanship reminds us of chiselling in smooth waxy marble; unlike the Roman epigrammatists, Navagero avoided pointed terminations.<sup>55</sup> The picture of Narcissus dead and transformed to a flower, in the elegy of 'Acon,' might be quoted as a fair specimen of his manner:—

Magna Parens, quæ cuncta leves producis in auras,  
 Totaque diverso germine picta nites;  
 Quæ passim arboribus, passim surgentibus herbis,  
 Sufficis omnifero larga alimenta sinu;

<sup>51</sup> *Carmina Quinque Illustrium Poetarum*, pp. 26-34.

<sup>52</sup> *Ib.* p. 38.

<sup>53</sup> 'When Lorenzo was dead, and Death went by in triumph, drawn by her black horses, her eyes fell on one who madly struck the chords, while sighs convulsed his breast. She turned, and stayed the car; he storms and calls on all the gods for Lorenzo, mixing tears with prayers, and sorrow with his tears, while sorrow suggests words of wilder freedom. Death laughed; remembering her old grudge, when Orpheus made his way to hell, she cried, "Lo, he too seeks to abrogate our laws, and lays his hand upon my rights!" Nor more delay; she struck the poet while he wept, and broke his heart-strings in the middle of his sighs. Alas! thus wast thou taken from us, ravished by harsh fate, Politian, master of the Italian lyre!'

<sup>54</sup> Notice especially 'Thyrsidis vota Veneri,' 'Invitatio ad amœnum fontem,' 'Leucippem amicam spe præmiorum invitât,' 'Vota Veneri ut amantibus faveat,' and 'In Almonem.'—*Carmina*, &c. pp. 52, 53, 54, 55.

<sup>55</sup> Paolo Giovio noticed this; in his *Elogia* he writes, '*Epigrammata non falsis aculeatque finibus, sed tenerâ illâ et prædulci priscâ suavitate claudēbat.*'

Excipe languentem puerum, moribundaque membra,  
 Æternumque tuâ fac, Dea, vivat ope.  
 Vivet, et ille vetus Zephyro redeunte quotannis  
 In niveo candor flore perennis erit.<sup>56</sup>

The warnings addressed to his mistress in her country rambles, to beware of rustic gods, and the whole eclogue of 'Iolas,' are written in a rich and facile style, that makes us wonder whether some poet of the Græco-Roman period did not live again in Navagero.<sup>57</sup> Only here and there, as in the case of all this neo-Latin writing, an awkward word or a defective cadence breaks the spell, and reminds us that it was an artificial thing. A few line forming the exordium to an unfinished poem on Italy may be inserted here for their intrinsic interest:—

Salve, cura Deum, mundi felicior ora,  
 Formosæ Veneris dulces salвете recessus:  
 Ut vos post tantos animi mentisque labores  
 Aspicio, lustroque libens! ut munere vestro  
 Sollicitas toto depello e pectore curas.<sup>58</sup>

Navagero, we are told, composed these verses on his return from a legation to Spain. Born in 1483, he spent his youth and early manhood in assiduous study. Excessive application undermined his health, and Giovio relates that he began to suffer from *atra bilis*, or the melancholy of scholars. The Venetian Senate had engaged him to compose the history of the Republic in Latin; this work was already begun when illness forced him to abandon it. He was afterwards employed in an unsuccessful mission to Charles V. and in diplomatic business at the Court of France. He died at Blois of fever, contracted in one of his hurried journeys. He was only forty-six when he perished, bequeathing to immediate posterity the fame of a poet at least equal to the ancients. In that age of affection and effort the natural flow of Navagero's verse, sensuous without coarseness and highly coloured without abuse of epithets, raised a chorus of applause that may strike the modern student as excessive. The memorial poems written on his death praise the purity of sentiment and taste which made him burn a copy of Martial yearly to the chaste Muses.<sup>59</sup> One friend calls upon the Nereids to build his tomb by the silent waters of the lagoons, and bids the Faun of Italy lament with broken reeds.<sup>60</sup> Another prophesies that his golden

<sup>56</sup> 'Mighty mother, thou who bringest all things forth to breathe the liquid air, who shinest in thy painted robe of diverse budding lives, thou who from thy teeming bosom givest nourishment to trees and sprouting herbs in every region of the earth, take to thyself the fainting boy, cherish his dying limbs, and make him live for ever by thy aid. Yes, he shall live; and that white loveliness of his, each year as spring returns, shall blossom in a snowy flower.'—*Carmina*, &c. p. 57.

<sup>57</sup> 'Ad Gelliam rusticantem,' *Carmina*, &c. pp. 64-66. 'Iolas,' *ib.* pp. 66-68.

<sup>58</sup> 'Hail, darling of the gods, thou happiest spot of earth! hail chosen haunt of beauty's queen! What joy I feel to see you thus again, and tread your shores after so many toils endured in mind and soul! How from my heart by your free gift I cast all anxious cares!'—*Carmina*, &c. p. 84.

<sup>59</sup> See the Hendecasyllabics of Johannes Matthæus, *Carmina*, &c. p. 86.

<sup>60</sup> Basilius Zanchius, *Carmina*, &c. p. 85.



poems will last as many years as there are flowers in spring, or grapes in autumn, or storms upon the sea, or stars in heaven, or kisses in Catullus, or atoms in the universe of Lucretius.<sup>61</sup>

A place very close to Navagero might be claimed for Francesco Maria Molza, a nobleman of Modena, who enjoyed great fame at Rome for his Latin and Italian poetry. After a wild life of pleasure he died at the age of forty-one, worn out with love and smitten by the plague of the Renaissance. The sweetest of his elegies celebrate the charms of Faustina Mancini, his favourite mistress. In spite of what Italians would call their *morbidezza*, it is impossible not to feel some contempt for the polished fluency, the sensual relaxation, of these soulless verses. A poem addressed to his friends upon his sick bed, within sight of certain death, combines the author's melody of cadence with a certain sobriety of thought and tender dignity of feeling.<sup>62</sup> It is perhaps, of all his compositions the worthiest to live. The following couplets describe the place which he would choose for his sepulchre:—

Non operosa peto titulos mihi marmora ponant,  
 Nostra sed accipiat fictilis ossa cadus;  
 Exceptet gremio quæ mox placidissima tellus,  
 Immites possint ne nocuisse feræ.  
 Rivulus hæc circum dissectus obambulet, unda  
 Clivoso qualis tramite ducta sonat;  
 Exiguus stet cæsa notis super ossa sepulta,  
 Nomen et his servet parva tabella meum:  
 Hic jacet ante annos crudeli tæbe preceptus  
 Molza; ter injecto pulvere, pastor, abi.  
 Forsitan in putrem longo post tempore glebam  
 Vertar, et hæc flores induet urna novos;  
 Populos aut potius abruptis artibus alba  
 Formosâ exsurgam conspicienda comâ.  
 Scilicet huc diti pecoris comitata magistro  
 Conveniet festo pulchra puella die;  
 Quæ molles ductet choreas, et veste recinctâ  
 Ad certos norit membra movere modos.<sup>63</sup>

The Paganism of the Renaissance, exchanging Christian rites for old mythologies, and classic in the very tomb, has rarely found sweeter ex-

<sup>61</sup> M. Antonius Flaminus, *ib.* p. 85.

<sup>62</sup> *Poemata Selecta*, pp. 203-206. An elegy written by Janus Etruscus, Pope's *Poemata Italorum*, vol. ii. p. 25, on a similar theme, though very inferior to Molza's, may be compared with it.

<sup>63</sup> 'I ask for no monument of wrought marble to proclaim my titles: let a vase of baked clay receive these bones. Let earth, quietest of resting-places, take them to herself, and save them from the injury of ravening wolves. And let a running stream divide its waters round my grave, drawn with the sound of music from a mountain-flank. A little tablet carved with simple letters will be enough to mark the spot, and to preserve my name: "Here lies Molza, slain before his day by wasting sickness: cast dust upon him thrice, and go thy way, gentle shepherd." It may be that after many years I shall turn to yielding clay, and my tomb shall deck herself with flowers; or, better, from my limbs shall spring a white poplar, and in its beauteous foliage I shall rise into the light of heaven. To this place will come, I hope, some lovely maid attended by the master of the flock; and she shall dance above my bones and move her feet to rhythmic music.'

pression than in this death song. We trace in it besides a note of modern feeling, the romantic sense of community with nature in the immortality of trees and flowers.<sup>64</sup>

Castiglione cannot claim comparison with Navagero for sensuous charm and easy flow of verse. Nor has he those touches of genuine poetry which raise Molsa above the level of a fluent versifier. His Latin exercises, however, offer much that is interesting to a student of Renaissance literature; while the depth of feeling and the earnestness of thought in his clear and powerful hexameters surpass the best efforts of Bembo's artificial muse. When we read the idyll entitled 'Alcon,' a lamentation for the friend whom he had loved in youth—

Alcon deliciæ Musarum et Apollinis, Alcon  
Pars animæ, cordis pars Alcon maxima nostri—<sup>65</sup>

we are impelled to question how far Milton owed the form of 'Lycidas' to these Italian imitations of the Græco-Roman style. What seemed false in tone to Johnson, what still renders that elegy the stumbling-block of taste to immature and unsympathetic students, is the highly artificial form given to natural feeling. Grief clothes herself in metaphors, and, abstaining from the direct expression of poignant emotion, dwells on thoughts and images that have a beauty of their own for solace. Nor is it in this quality of art alone that 'Lycidas' reminds us of Renaissance Latin verse. The curious blending of allusions to Church and State with pastoral images is no less characteristic of the Italian manner. As in 'Lycidas,' so also in these lines from Castiglione's 'Alcon,' the truth of sorrow transpires through a thin veil of bucolic romance:—

Heu miserande puer, fatis surrepte malignis!  
Non ego te posthac, pastorum adstante coronâ,  
Victorem aspiciam volucris certare sagittâ;  
Aut jaculo, aut durâ socios superare palæstrâ.  
Non tecum posthac molli resupinus in umbrâ  
Effugiam longos æstivo tempore soles:  
Non tua vicinos mulcebit fistula montes,  
Docta nec umbrosæ resonabunt carmina valles:  
Non tua corticibus toties inscripta Lycoris,  
Atque ignis Galatea meus nos jam simul ambos  
Audierint ambæ nostros cantare furores.  
Nos etenim a teneris simul usque huc viximus annis,  
Frigora pertulimusque æstus noctesque diesque,  
Communique simul sunt parta armenta labore.  
Rura mea hæc tecum communia; viximus una:  
Te moriente igitur curnam mihi vita relicta est?  
Heu male me ira Deûm patriis abduxit ab oris,  
Ne manibus premerem morientia lumina amicis.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>64</sup> For the picture of the girl dancing on the lover's grave, cf. Omar Khayyam. Cf. too Walt Whitman's metaphor for grass—"the beautiful uncut hair of graves."

<sup>65</sup> 'Alcon, the darling of Phebus and the Muses; Alcon, a part of my own soul; Alcon, the greatest part of my own heart.'—*Carmina Quinque Poetarum*, p. 89.

<sup>66</sup> 'Alas! poor youth, withdrawn from us by fate malign. Never again shall I behold thee, while the shepherds stand around, win prizes with thy flying shafts or spear, or

Castiglione's most polished exercises are written on fictitious subjects in elegiac metre. Thus he feigns a letter from his wife, in the style of the 'Heroidum Epistolæ,' praying him to beware of Rome's temptations, and to keep his heart for her.<sup>67</sup> Again he warns his mistress to avoid the perils of the sea-beach, where the Tritons roam:—

Os informe illis, rictus, oculique minaces,  
Asperaque anguineo cortice membra rigent:  
Barba impexa, ingens, algâ limoque virenti  
Oblita, oletque gravi lurida odore coma.<sup>68</sup>

In these couplets we seem to read a transcript from some fresco of Mantegna or Julio Romano. Two long elegies are devoted to the theme of marine monsters, and the tale of Hippolytus is introduced to clinch the poet's argument. Among Castiglione's poems of compliment, forming a pleasant illustration to his book of the 'Courtier,' may be mentioned the lines on 'Elisabetta Gonzaga singing.'<sup>69</sup> Nor can I omit the most original of his elegies, written, or at least conceived, in the camp of Julius before Mirandola.<sup>70</sup> Walking by night in the trenches under the beleaguered walls, Castiglione meets the ghost of Lodovico Pico, who utters a lamentation over the wrongs inflicted on his city and his race. The roar of cannon cuts short this monologue, and the spectre vanishes into darkness with a groan. During his long threnody the prince of Mirandola apostrophises the warlike Pope in these couplets:—

O Pater, O Pastor populorum, O maxime mundi  
Arbiter, humanum qui genus omne regis;  
Justitiæ pacisque dator placidæque quietis,  
Credita cui soli est vita salusque hominum;  
Quem Deus ipse Erebi fecit Coelique potentem,  
Ut nutu pateant utraque regna tuo!<sup>71</sup>

wrestle for the crown; never again with thee reclining in the shade shall I all through a summer's day avoid the sun. No more shall thy pipe soothe the neighbouring hills, the vales repeat thy artful songs. No more shall thy Lycoris, whose name inscribed by thee the woods remember, and my Galatea hear us both together chaunt our loves. For we like brothers lived our lives till now from infancy: heat and cold, days and nights, we bore; our herds were reared with toil and care together. These fields of mine were also thine: we lived one common life. Why, then, when thou must die, am I still left to live? Alas! in evil hour the wrath of Heaven withdrew me from my native land, nor suffered me to close thy lids with a friend's hands!"—*Carmina*, &c. p. 91.

<sup>67</sup> *Ib.* p. 100.

<sup>68</sup> 'Hideous is their face, their grinning mouth, their threatening eyes, and their rough limbs are stiff with snaky scales; their beard hangs long and wide, uncombed, tangled with sea-weed and green ooze, and their dusky hair smells rank of brine.'—*Ib.* p. 103.

<sup>69</sup> 'De Elisabetta Gonzaga canente,' *Carmina*, &c. p. 97. Cf. Bembo's 'Ad Lucretiam Borgiam,' *ib.* p. 14, on a similar theme.

<sup>70</sup> *Ib.* p. 95.

<sup>71</sup> 'O father, O shepherd of the nations, O great master of the world who rulest all the human race, giver of justice, peace, and tranquil ease; thou to whom alone is committed the life and salvation of men, whom God Himself made lord of hell and heaven, that either realm might open at thy nod.'

When the spiritual authority of the Popes came thus to be expressed in Latin verse, it was impossible not to treat them as deities. The temptation to apply to them the language of Roman religion was too great; the double opportunity of flattering their vanity as Pontiffs, and their ears as scholars, was too attractive to be missed. In another place Castiglione used the following phrases about Leo:—

Nec culpanda tua est mora, nam præcepta Deorum  
Non fas, nec tutum est spernere velle homini:  
Esse tamen fertur clementia tanta Leonis  
Ut facili humanas audiat ore preces.<sup>72</sup>

Navagero called Julius II, *novus ex alto demissus Olympo Deus* (a new God sent down from heaven to earth), and declared that the people of Italy, in thanksgiving for his liberation of their country from the barbarians, would pay him yearly honours with prayer and praise:—

Ergo omnes, veluti et Phœbo Panique, quotannis  
Pastores certis statuent tibi sacra diebus,  
Magne Pater; nostrisque diu cantabere silvis.  
Te rupes, te saxa, cavæ te, Maxime Juli,  
Convalles, nemorumque frequens iterabit imago.  
At vero nostris quæcumque in saltibus usquam  
Quercus erit, ut quæque suos dant tempora flores,  
Semper erit variis ramos innexa coronis;  
Inscriptumque geret felici nomine truncum.  
Tum quoties pastum expellet, pastasve reducet  
Nostrum aliquis pecudes; toties id mente revolvens  
Ut liceat, factum esse tuo, Pater optime, ductu;  
Nullus erit, qui non libet tibi lacte recenti,  
Nullus erit qui non teneros tibi nutriat agnos.  
Quin audire preces nisi dedignabere agrestes,  
Tu nostra ante Deos in vota vocaberis omnes.  
Ipse ego bina tibi solenni altaria ritu,  
Et geminos sacrâ e quercu lauroque virenti  
Vicino lucos Nanceli in litore ponam.<sup>73</sup>

It will be remembered that the oak was the ensign of the Della Rovere family, so that when the poets exalted Julius to Olympus, they were not in want of a tree sacred to the new deity. To trace this Pagan flattery

<sup>72</sup> 'I do not blame thee for delaying thy return, since neither is it safe nor right for man to set at naught a God's command; and yet so great is Leo's kindness said to be that he inclines a ready ear to human prayers.'—*Ib.* p. 102.

<sup>73</sup> 'Therefore shall all our shepherds pay thee divine honours, as to Pan or Phœbus, on fixed days, great Father; and long shalt thou be celebrated in our forests. Thy praise, Julius the Great, the cliffs, the rocks, the hollow valleys, and the woodland echoes shall repeat. Wherever in our groves an oak tree stands, as spring and summer bring the flowers, its branches shall be hung with wreaths, its trunk shall be inscribed with thy auspicious name. As often as our shepherds drive the flocks afield, or bring them pastured home, each one, remembering that he does this under thy protection, shall pour libations of new milk forth to thee, and rear thee tender lambs for sacrifice. Nay, if thou spurn not rustic prayers, before all gods shall we invoke thee in our supplications. I myself will build and dedicate to thee two altars and will plant twin groves of sacred oak and laurel evergreen for thee.'—*Carmina*, &c. pp. 58, 59.

of the Popes through all its forms would be a tedious business. It will be enough to quote Poliziano's 'Sapphics' to Innocent VIII.:—

Roma cui paret dominusque Tiberis,  
Qui vicem summi geris hic Tonantis,  
Qui potes magnum reserare et idem  
Claudere cœlum.<sup>74</sup>

A more quaint confusion of Latin mythology and mediæval superstition, more glibly and trippingly conveyed in flimsy verse, can hardly be imagined; and yet even this, I think, is beaten by the ponderous conceits of Fracastoro, who, through the mouth of the goat-footed Pan, saluted Julius III. as the mountain of salvation, playing on his name Del Monte:—

Hoc in Monte Dei pecudes pascentur et agni,  
Graminis æterni pingues et velleris aurei;  
Exsiliunt et aquæ vivæ, quibus ubera capræ  
Grandia distendant, distendant ubera vaccæ.<sup>75</sup>

The mountain soon becomes a shepherd, and the shepherd not only rules the people, and feeds the sheep of God, but chains the monsters of the Reformation to a rock in Caucasus, and gives peace and plenty to Italy:—

Æternis illum numeris ad sidera tollent,  
Heroemque, deumque, salutiferumque vocabunt.<sup>76</sup>

Returning to Castiglione: I have already spoken of his epitaph on Raphael and his description of the newly-discovered 'Ariadne.'<sup>77</sup> The latter exercise in rhetoric competes with Sadoletto's laboured hexameters on the Laocoon. These verses, frigid as a prize poem in our estimation, moved Bembo to enthusiasm. When they appeared he wrote to Sadoletto, 'I have read your poem on Laocoon a hundred times. O wonder-working bard! Not only have you made for us, as it were, a second statue to match that masterpiece; but you have engraved upon my mind the very statue itself. This panegyric stirs a smile when we compare it with Sadoletto's own prolusion, the fruit of a grave intellect and cultivated taste rather than of genius and inspiration.'<sup>78</sup>

Time would fail to tell of all the later Latin poets —of La Casa's polished lyrics in the style of Horace, of Amalteo's waxen eclogues, of

<sup>74</sup> 'Thou whom Rome obeys, and royal Tiber, who wieldest upon earth the Thunderer's power, whose it is to lock and open the gates of heaven.'—*Ib.* p. 260.

<sup>75</sup> 'In this mountain of the Lord shall flocks and herds feed, fat with eternal pastures and golden-fleeced. Living waters too shall leap forth, wherewith the goats shall swell their udders, and the kine likewise.'—*Poemata Selecta*, p. 132.

<sup>76</sup> 'Him with immortal verse the poets shall exalt to heaven, and call him hero, god, and saviour.'—*Ib.* p. 133.

<sup>77</sup> See above, pp. 525, 529.

<sup>78</sup> See *Carmina Quinque Poetarum*, pp. 318-336.

Aonio Paleario's fantastic hexameters upon the 'Immortality of the Soul,'<sup>79</sup> of Strozzi's elegies, of Ariosto's epigrams, and Calcagnini's learned muse. When I repeat that every educated man wrote Latin verses in that century, and that all who could committed their productions to the press, enough has been said to prove the impossibility of dealing more than superficially with so vast a mass of meritorious mediocrity.

One name remains to be rescued from the decent obscurity of the 'Delitiae Poetarum Italorum.' Marcantonio Flaminio was born at Seravalle in 1498. He came, while yet a young man, to the Court of Leo armed with Latin poetry for his credentials. No better claim on patronage from Pope or cardinal could be preferred in that age of twanging lyres. At Rome Flaminio lived in the service of Alessandro Farnese, whose hospitality he afterwards repaid with verses honourable alike to poet and patron by their freedom from vulgar flattery. The atmosphere of a Court, however, was uncongenial to Flaminio. Fond of a country life, addicted to serious studies, sober in his tastes, and cheerful in his spirits, pious, and unaffectedly unambitious, he avoided the stream of the great world and lived retired. Community of interests brought him into close connection with the Cardinals Pole and Contarini, from whom he caught so much of the Reformation spirit as a philosophical Italian could assimilate; but it was not in his modest and quiet nature to raise the cry of revolt against authority.<sup>80</sup> The most distinguished wits and scholars of the age were among his intimate friends. Both his poems and his correspondence reflect an agreeable light upon the literary society of the late Renaissance. The Latin verses, with which we are at present occupied, breathe genuine piety, healthful simplicity, and moral purity, in strong contrast with the neopaganism of the Roman circle. These qualities suit the robust style, clear, terse, and nervous, he knew how to use. It is pleasant to close the series of Italian Latinists with one who combined the best art of his century with the temper of a republican and the spirit of a Christian.

The most prominent quality of Flaminio as a poet is love of the country. Three little compositions describing his own farm are ani-

<sup>79</sup> A didactic poem in three books; Pope's *Poemata Italorum*, vol. i. pp. 211-270. The description of the Resurrection, the Last Judgment, and the entrance of the blessed into Paradise, forming the conclusion of the last book, is an excellent specimen of *barocco* style and bathos. Virgil had written, '*Itē domum pastī, si quis pudor, itē juvenci!*' Paleario makes the Judge address the damned souls thus: '*Itē domum in tristem, si quis pudor, itē ruentes,*' &c. How close Milton's path lay to the worst faults in poetry, and how wonderfully he escaped, may well be calculated by the study of such verse as this.

<sup>80</sup> This epigram on Savonarola shows Flaminio's sympathy with the preachers of pure doctrine:—

Dum fera flamma tuos, Hieronyme, pascitur artus,  
Religio, sacras dilaniata comas,  
Flevit, et o, dixit, crudeles parcite flammæ,  
Parcite, sunt isto viscera nostra rogo.

mated with the enthusiasm of genuine affection.<sup>81</sup> We feel that no mere reminiscence of Catullus makes him write—

Jan vos revisam, jam juvabit arbores  
Manu paternâ consitas  
Videre, jam libebit in cubiculo  
Molles inire somnulos.<sup>82</sup>

Nor is it an idle prayer he addresses to the Muses in these lines:—

At vos, o Heliconiæ puellæ,  
Queis fontes et amœna rura cordi,  
Si carâ mihi luce cariores  
Estis, jam miserescite obsecrantis,  
Meque, urbis strepitu tumultuosæ  
Ereptum, in placido locate agello.<sup>83</sup>

He is never tired of contrasting the pleasures of the country with the noise and weariness of Rome:—

Ipse miser tumultuosâ  
Urbe detinear; tibi benignus  
Dedit Jupiter in remoto agello  
Latentem placidâ frui quiete,  
Inter Socraticos libros, et inter  
Nymphas et Satyros, nihil profani  
Curantem populi leves honores.<sup>84</sup>

Flaminio's thought of the country is always connected with the thought of study. The picture of a tranquil scholar's life among the fields, diversified by sport and simple pleasures of the rustic folk, gives freshness to his hendecasyllables, whether addressed to his patron Alessandro Farnese, or to his friends Galeazzo Florimonte and Francesco Torriani:<sup>85</sup>—

Inde ocellos  
Ut primum sopor incubans gravabit,  
Jucundissime amice, te sub antrum  
Ducam, quod croceis tegunt corymbis  
Serpentes hedere, imminensque laurus  
Suaviter foliis susurrat: at tu  
Ne febrim metuas gravedinemve;  
Est enim locus innocens: ubi ergo  
His satis requieveris, legentur  
Lusus Virgilio, et Syracusani

<sup>81</sup> 'Ad Agellum suum.'—*Poemata Selecta*, pp. 155, 156, 177.

<sup>82</sup> 'Now shall I see you once again; now shall I have the joy of gazing on the trees my father planted, and falling into gentle slumber in his little room.'

<sup>83</sup> 'Maidens of Helicon, who love the fountains and the pleasant fields, as you are dearer to me than the dear light, have pity now upon your suppliant, take me from the tumult of the noisy town, and place me in my tranquil farm.'

<sup>84</sup> 'I, poor wretch, am imprisoned in the noisy town. Kind Jupiter allows you, secluded in your distant farm, to take the joys of peace among Socratic books, among the nymphs and satyrs, unheeding the light honours of the vulgar crowd.'—'Ad Honoratum Fascitellum,' *Poemata Selecta*, p. 178.

<sup>85</sup> *Poemata Selecta*, pp. 153, 169, 173.



Vatis, quo nihil est magis venustum,  
 Nihil dulcius, ut mihi videtur.  
 Cum se fregerit æstus, in virenti  
 Convalle spatiabimur; sequetur  
 Brevis coena; redibis inde ad urbem.<sup>86</sup>

One of Flaminio's best poems is written from his friend Stefano Sauli's villa near Genoa.<sup>87</sup> It describes how he spends his time between the philosophy of Aristotle and the verses of Catullus, while Sauli at his side devotes himself to Cicero. The fall of evening lures them from their study to the sea-beach: perched upon a water-girded rock, they angle with long reeds for fishes, or watch the white sails on the purple waves. The same theme is repeated in a copy of hexameters addressed to Sauli.<sup>88</sup> Flaminio had fallen ill of fever at Rome. To quit the city was his cure:—

Scilicet ut Romæ corruptas fugimus auras,  
 Et riguos patriæ montes saltusque salubres  
 Venimus, effoetos venit quoque robor in artus:  
 Diffugit macies, diffugit corpore pallor;  
 Et somnus vigiles irrepsit blandus ocellos,  
 Quem neque desiliens crepitanti rivulus undâ,  
 Nec Lethea mihi duxere papavera quondam.<sup>89</sup>

Sauli, for his part, is congratulated on having exchanged the cares of Church and State for Ciceronian studies among his laurel groves and gleaming orange gardens.

Flaminio's intimate relations with the ablest men of the century, those especially who were engaged in grave and Christian studies, add extrinsic interest to his fugitive pieces. In one poem he alludes to the weak health of Cardinal Pole;<sup>90</sup> in another he compares Plato's description of the ideal republic with Contarini's work upon the magistrates and commonwealth of Venice:—

Descripsit ille maximum quondam Plato  
 Longis suorum ambagibus voluminum,  
 Quis civitatis optimus foret status:  
 Sed hunc ab ipsâ sæculorum origine  
 Nec ulla vidit, nec videbit civitas.

<sup>86</sup> 'Then, when sleep descends upon your eyes, best friend of mine, I'll lead you to a cave o'ercurtained by the wandering ivy's yellow bunches, whereby the sheltering laurel murmurs with her gently waving leaves. Fear no fever or dull headache. The place is safe. So when you are rested, we will read the rustic songs of Virgil or Theocritus; sweet and more charming verse I know not; and after the day's heat is past, we will stroll in some green valley. A light supper follows, and then you shall return to town.'—*Ib.* p. 174.

<sup>87</sup> 'Ad Christophorum Longolium,' *Ib.*

<sup>88</sup> *Poemata Selecta*, p. 163.

<sup>89</sup> 'No sooner had I left Rome's tainted air for the clear streams and healthful forests of my native land, than strength returned into my wasted limbs; my body lost the pallor and emaciation of disease, and sweet sleep crept upon my wakeful eyes, such as no waters falling with a tinkling sound or Lethe's poppies had induced before.'

<sup>90</sup> *Poemata Selecta*, p. 162.

At Contareus optimam rempublicam  
 Parvi libelli disputationibus  
 Illam probavit esse, plus millesima  
 Quam cernit ætas Adriatico in mari  
 Florere pace, litteris, pecuniâ.<sup>91</sup>

When Vittoria Colonna died, Flaminio wrote a lamentation on the loss he had sustained, and on the extinction of so great a light for Italy. These verses are remarkable for their sobriety and strength:—

Cui mens candida, candidique mores,  
 Virtus vivida, comitasque sancta,  
 Cœleste ingenium eruditioque  
 Rara, nectare dulciora verba,  
 Summa nobilitas, decora vultûs  
 Majestas, opulenta sed bonorum  
 Et res et domus usque aperta ad usus.<sup>92</sup>

The same firm and delicate touch in the delineation of character gives value to the lines written on his father's death:—

Vixisti, genitor, bene ac beate,  
 Nec pauper, neque dives, eruditus  
 Satis, et satis eloquens, valente  
 Semper corpore, mente sanâ, amicis  
 Jucundus, pietate singulari.  
 Nunc lustris bene sexdecim peractis  
 Ad divûm proficisceris beatas  
 Oras; i, genitor, tuumque natum  
 Olympi cito siste tecum in arce.<sup>93</sup>

At the risk of extending this notice of Flaminio's poetry beyond due limits, I must quote from a copy of verses sent to Alessandro Farnese, together with a volume containing the Latin *prolusiones* of the North Italian scholars:—

Hos tibi lepidissimos poetas  
 Dono, tempora quos tulere nostra,  
 Fortunata nimis, nimis beata  
 Nostra tempora, quæ suos Catullos,  
 Tibullos, et Horatios, suosque  
 Marones genuere. Quis putasset,

<sup>91</sup> 'Plato, the greatest of sages, once described in his long volumes the best form of a State; but this from the beginning of the world till now hath never yet been seen, nor will it afterwards be seen in any city. Contarini in his little book has proved that the best commonwealth is that which now for more than a thousand years has flourished in the Adriatic with peace, letters, and wealth.'—*Poemata Selecta*, p. 162.

<sup>92</sup> 'Ad Hieronymum Turrianum,' *ib.* p. 168. 'Her mind is pure, her manners pure; her virtue lively, her courtesy without a taint of earth; her intellect was heavenly, her learning rare; her words sweeter than nectar; her nobility the highest; her features beautiful in their majesty; her wealth liberally open to the use of good men.'

<sup>93</sup> 'Well and happily hast thou lived, my father; neither poor nor rich; learned enough and eloquent enough; of vigorous body and of healthy mind; pleasant to thy friends, and in thy piety unrivalled. Now, after sixteen lustris finished, thou goest to the regions of the blest. Go, father, and soon greet thy son, to stay with thee in heaven's high seat.'—'Ad Patrem morientem,' *Poemata Selecta*, p. 157.

Post tot sæcula tam tenebricosa,  
 Et tot Ausoniæ graves ruinas,  
 Tanta lumina tempore uno in unâ  
 Tam brevi regione Transpadanâ  
 Oriri potuisse? quæ vel ipsa  
 Sola barbarie queant fugatâ  
 Suum reddere litteris Latinis  
 Splendorem, veteremque dignitatem.<sup>94</sup>

There is the whole of humanism in this passage—the belief in the unity of Italian civilisation, the conviction that the Middle Ages were but an interruption of historic continuity, the confidence in the restoration of classic literature, and the firm hope that Latin would never cease to be the language of culture. Flaminio says nothing, unless parenthetically, about the real woes of his country. The tyranny of the Spaniard and the violence of the German are reckoned with the old wrongs of the Goth and the Vandal in one phrase—‘*tot graves ruinas.*’ He does not touch upon the dismemberment of Italy into mutually jealous and suspicious States: for him the Italian nation, even in a dream, has no existence. He is satisfied with a literary ideal. Too fortunate, too blessed, are these days of ours, in spite of Florence extinguished, Rome sacked, Milan devastated, Venice curbed, because forsooth, Bembo and Fracastoro have made a pinchbeck age of poetry. Here lay the incurable weakness of the humanistic movement. The vanity of the scholar, determined to seek the present in the past, building the walls of Troy anew with borrowed music, and singing in falsetto while Rome was burning—this blindness to the actual situation of Italy was scarcely less pernicious, scarcely less a sign of incapacity for civil life than the selfishness of the Despots or the egotism of the Papacy. Italy was foredoomed to lose her place among the nations at the very moment when she was recovering culture for the modern world; and when that culture was recovered through her industry and genius, not she, but the races of the North, began to profit by the acquisition—not her imitations of the Latin Muse, but the new languages of Europe were destined to prevail and lead the age.

Another point for observation is that the centre of humanistic studies has shifted.<sup>95</sup> Florence, disillusioned, drained of strength, and sucked dry by the tyrants, holds her tongue. The schools of Naples and Rome

<sup>94</sup> *Poemata Selecta*, p. 166. ‘These most graceful poets I give you, the offspring of our too, too happy times, which have produced their Catullus and their Horace, their Tibullus and their Maro. Who could have thought, after so many ages of such darkness, and all the ruin that has weighed on Italy, that so many lights could have arisen at one epoch in one little region of the land above the Po? They alone are enough to put to flight the gloom of barbarism, and to restore its antique glory and own splendour to Latin literature.’ After this he goes on to add that these poets will confer eternal lustre on Italy. Not only the northern nations of Europe, but America also has begun to study Latin; and races in another hemisphere will take their culture from these pages. The Cardinal is finally reminded that immortality of fame awaits him in their praises.

<sup>95</sup> ‘*Tam brevi regione Transpadanâ.*’

are silent. Lombardy is now the mother of poets, who draw their inspiration no longer from Valdarno or the myrtle groves of Posilippo, but from the blue waves of Garda.<sup>96</sup> The university where science still flourishes is Padua. The best professors of the classics, Celio Calcagnini and Lilus Gyraldus, teach at Ferrara. Bembo, the dictator of letters for his century, Navagero, the sweetest versifier, Contarini, the most sober student, are Venetians. Stefano Sauli, the author of a Ciceronian treatise on the Christian hero, is a patrician of Genoa. Sadoletto and Molsa are Modenese. Verona claims Fracastoro and the Torriani. Imola is the mother city of Flaminio. Castiglione and Capilupio are natives of Mantua; Amalteo and Vida of Forli and Cremona; Bonfadio and Archio of Lake Garda. If we seek the causes of this change, we find them partly in the circumstances that Venice at this period was free, while Ferrara still retained her independence under native princes; partly also in the fact that Florence had already overtaxed her intellectual energies. Like a creeping paralysis, the extinction of liberty and spiritual force was gradually invading all the members of the Italian Community. The Revival of Learning came to an end, as far as Italy was concerned, in these Transpadane poets.

To trace the history of philosophic thought, set in motion by the Renaissance and stamped out by the Counter-Reformation, and to describe the aftergrowth of art and literature encouraged by the Catholic reaction, must form the subject of a separate inquiry.

I hope, if I have time and strength, after the completion of my work on the Renaissance, to trace this sequel in a volume on 'Italy and the Council of Trent.' To this chapter of Italian history will also belong the philosophy of the sixteenth century, the poetry of Tasso, the painting of the Bolognese masters, and the new music of Palestrina.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. Bembo's *Benacus*, Bonfadio's *Gazani Vici Descriptio*, Fracastoro's *Ad Franciscum Turrianum Veronensem*, &c.

## CHAPTER IX

### CONCLUSION

*General Survey—The Part played in the Revival by the Chief Cities—Preoccupation with Scholarship in spite of War and Conquest—Place of the Humanists in Society—Distributors of Praise and Blame—Flattery and Libels—Comparison with the Sophists—The Form preferred to the Matter of Literature—Ideal of Culture as an end in itself—Suspicion of Zealous Churchmen—Intrusion of Humanism into the Church—Irreligion of the Humanists—Gyraldi's 'Progymnasma'—Ariosto—Bohemian Life—Personal Immorality—Want of Fixed Principles—Professional Vanity—Literary Pride—Estimate of Humanistic Literature—Study of Style—Influence of Cicero—Valla's 'Elegantia'—Stylistic Puerilities—Value attached to Rhetoric—'Oratore'—Moral Essays—Epistolography—Histories—Critical and Antiquarian Studies—Large Appreciation of Antiquity—Liberal Spirit—Poggio and Jerome of Prague—Humanistic Type of Education—Its Diffusion through Europe—Future Prospects—Decay of Learning in Italy.*

IN tracing the history of the Revival, we have seen how the impulse, first communicated by Petrarch, was continued by Boccaccio and his immediate successors. We have watched the enthusiasm for antiquity strike root in Florence, spread to Rome, and penetrate the Courts of Italy. One city after another receives the light and hands it on, until the whole cycle of study has been traversed and the vigour of the nation is exhausted. Florence discovers manuscripts, founds libraries, learns Greek, and leads the movement of the fifteenth century. Naples criticises; Rome translates; Mantua and Ferrara form a system of education; Venice commits the literature of the classics to the press. By the combined and successive activity of the chief Italian centres, not only is the culture of antiquity regained; it is also appropriated in all its various branches, discussed and illustrated, placed beyond the reach of accident, and delivered over in its integrity to Europe. The work thus performed by the Italians was begun in peace; but it had to be continued under the pressure of wars and national disasters unparalleled in the history of any other modern people. Not for a single moment did the students relax their energy. In the midst of foreign armies, deafened by the roar of cannon and the tumult of sacked towns, exiled from their homes, robbed of their books, deprived of their subsistence, they advanced to their end with the irresistible obstinacy of insects. The drums and tramlings of successive conquests and invasions by four warlike nations—Frenchmen, Spaniards, Germans, Swiss—could not disturb them. Drop by drop, Italy was being drained of blood; from the first the only question was which of her assailants should pos-

sess the beauty of her corpse. Yet the student, intent upon his manuscripts, paid but little heed. So non-existent was the sense of nationality in Italy that the Italians did not know they were being slowly murdered. When the agony was over, and the ruin was accomplished, they congratulated themselves on being still the depositaries of polite literature. Nations that are nations, seek to inspire fear, or at least respect. The Italians were contented with admiration, and looked confidently to the world for gratitude. The task of two toilsome, glorious centuries had been accomplished. The chasm between Rome and the Renaissance was bridged over, and a plain way was built for the progressive human spirit. Italy, downtrodden in the mire of blood and ruins, should still lead the van and teach the peoples. It was a sublime delusion, the last phase of an impulse so powerful in its origin that to prophesy an ending was impossible. Yet how delusive was the expectation is proved by the immediate history of Italy, enslaved and decadent, outstripped by the nations she had taught, and scorned by the world that owed her veneration.

The humanists, who were the organ of this intellectual movement, formed, as we have seen, a literary commonwealth, diffused through all the Courts and cities of Italy. As the secretaries of Popes and princes, as the chancellors of republics, as orators on all occasions of public and private ceremony, they occupied important posts of influence, and had the opportunity of leavening society with their opinions. Furthermore, we have learned to know them in their capacity of professors at the universities, of house-tutors in the service of noblemen, and of authors. Closely connected among themselves by their feuds no less than by their friendships, and working to one common end of scholarship, it was inevitable that these men, after the enthusiasm for antiquity had once become the fashion, should take the lead and mould the genius of the nation. Their epistles, invectives, treatises, and panegyrics, formed the study of an audience that embraced all cultivated minds in Italy. Thus the current literature of humanism played the same part in the fifteenth century as journalism in the nineteenth, and the humanists had the same kind of coherence in relation to the public as the *quatrième état* of modern times. The respect they inspired as the arbiters of praise and blame was only equalled by their vast pretensions. Eugenius IV., living at the period of their highest influence, is reported to have said that they were as much to be feared for their malice as to be loved for their learning. While they claimed the power of conferring an immortality of honour or dishonour, no one dared to call their credit with posterity in question. Nothing seemed more dreadful than the fate reserved for Paul II. in the pages of platina; and even so robust a ruler as Francesco Sforza sought to buy the praises of Filelfo. Flattery in all its branches, fulsome and delicate, wholesale and allusive, was developed by them as an art whereby to gain their living. The official history of this period is rendered almost worthless by its sustained note of panegyrical laudation. Our ears are deafened with the eulogies of

petty patrons transformed into Mæcenases, of carpet knights compared to Leonidas, of tyrants equalled with Augustus, and of generals who never looked on blood-shed tricked out as Hannibals or Scipios. As a pendant to panegyric, the art of abuse reached its climax in the invectives whereby the scholars sought to hand their comrades down to all time 'immortally immerded,' or to vilify the public enemies of their employers. As in the case of praise, so also in the case of blame, it is impossible to attach importance to the writings of the humanists. Their vaulting ambition to depreciate each other overleaped itself. All their literature of defamation serves now only to throw light on the general impurity of an age in which such monstrous charges carried weight. Unluckily, this double vice of humanism struck deep into Italian literature. Without the scholars of the fifteenth century, it is hardly possible that such a brigand as Pietro Aretino, who levied blackmail from princes at the point of his venomous quill, or such an unprincipled biographer as Paolo Giovio, who boasted that he wrote with a golden or a silver pen, as pleased him best, could have existed. Bullying and fawning tainted the very sources of history, and a false ideal of the writer's function was established by the practice of men like Poggio.

It is obvious and easy to compare the humanists of the Renaissance with the sophists of antiquity. Whether we think of the rivals of Socrates at Athens, or of the Greek rhetoricians of the Roman period,<sup>1</sup> the parallel is tolerably close. From certain points of view the Italian scholars remind us of the former class; from others, again, they recall the latter. The essence of sophism is the substitution of semblance for reality, indifference to truth provided a fair show be made, combined with verbal ingenuity and practice in the art of exposition. The sophist feels no need of forming opinions on a sound basis, or of adhering to principles. Regarding thought as the subject-matter of literary treatment, he is chiefly concerned with giving it a fair and plausible investiture in language. Instead of recognising that he must live up to the standard he professes, he takes delight in expressing with force the contrary of what he acts. The discord between his philosophy and his conduct awakes no shame in him, because it is the highest triumph of his art to persuade by eloquence and to dazzle by rhetoric. Phrases and sentences supply the place of feelings and convictions. Sonorous cadences and harmonies of language are always ready to conceal the want of substance in his matter or the flimsiness of his argument. At the same time the sophist's enthusiasm for a certain form of culture, and his belief in the sophistic method, may be genuine.

The literature of the Revival is full of such sophism. Men who lived loose lives, were never tired of repeating the commonplaces of the Ciceronian ethics, praising simplicity and self-control with the pen they used for reproducing the scandals of Martial, mingling impudent

<sup>1</sup> 'Græculi esurientes.' Lives written by Philostratus.



demands for money and flatteries of debauched despots with panegyrics of Pætus Thrasea and eulogies of Cincinnatus. Conversely, students of eminent sobriety, like Guarino da Verona, thought it no harm to welcome Beccadelli's 'Hermaphroditus' with admiration; while the excellent Nicholas V. spent nine days in perusing the filthy satires of Filelfo. It was enough that the form was elegant, according to their standards of taste, the Latinity copious and sound:—the subject matter raised no scruples.

This vice of regarding only the exterior of literature produced a fatal weakness in the dissertations of the age. If a humanist wanted to moralise the mutability of fortune or the disadvantages of matrimony, he did not take the trouble to think, or the pains to borrow illustrations from his own experience. He strung together quotations and classical instances, expending his labour on the polish of the style, and fancying he had proved something by piquancy displayed in handling old material. When he undertook history, the same fault was apparent. Instead of seeking to set forth the real conditions of his native city, to describe its political vicissitudes and constitutional development, or to paint the characters of its great men, he prepared imaginary speeches and avoided topics incapable of expression in pure Latin. The result was that whole libraries of ethical disquisitions and historical treatises, bequeathed with proud confidence by their authors to the admiration of posterity, are now reposing in unhonoured dust, ransacked at rare intervals by weary students with restless fingers in search of such meagre scraps of information as even a humanist could not succeed in excluding.

The humanists resembled the sophists again in their profession to teach wisdom for pay. What philosophy was for the early Greeks, classic culture was for Italy in the Renaissance; and this the scholars sold. Antiquity lay before them like an open book. From their seat among the learned they doled out the new lore of life to eager pupils. And as the more sober-minded of the Athenians regarded the educational practice of the sophists with suspicion, so the humanists came to be dreaded as the corrupters of youth. The peculiar turn they gave to mental training, by diverting attention from patriotic duties to literary pleasures, by denationalising the interests of students, and by distracting serious thought from affairs of the present to interests of the past, tended to confirm the political debility of the Italians; nor can it be doubted that the substitution of Pagan for Christian ideals intensified the demoralisation of the age. Many arguments used by Aristophanes and Xenophon might be repeated against these sophists of the Renaissance.<sup>2</sup>

On this point it is worth observing that, though humanism took the Papal Court by storm and installed itself in pomp and pride within the Vatican, the lower clergy and the leaders of religious revivals, in

<sup>2</sup> Aristoph., *Clouds*, Speeches of Dikaïos Logos; Xen., *On Hunting*, chap. xiii.

no mere spirit of blind prejudice, but with solid force of argument, denounced it. S. Bernardino and Savonarola were only two among many who preached against the humanists from the pulpit. And yet, while we admit that the influences of the Revival injured morality, and gave a cosmopolitan direction to energies that ought to have been concentrated on the preservation of national existence, we are unable to join with these ecclesiastical antagonists in their crusade. Humanism was a necessary moment in the evolution of the modern world; and whatever were its errors, however weakening it may have been to Italy, this phase had to be passed through, this nation had to suffer for the general good.

The intrusion of the humanists into the Papal Curia was a victory of the purely secular spirit. It is remarkable how very few scholars took orders except with a view of holding minor benefices. They remained virtual laymen, drawing the emoluments of their cures at a distance. If Filelfo, after the death of his second wife, proposed to enter the Church, he did so because in his enormous vanity he hoped to gain the scarlet hat, and thought this worth the sacrifice of independence. The only great monastic *litteratus* was Ambrogio, General of the Camaldolese Order. Maffeo Vegio is the single instance I can remember of a poet-philologer who assumed the cowl. These statements, it will be understood, refer chiefly to the second or aggressive period of the Revival. Classic erudition was so common in the fourth that to be without a humanistic tincture was, even among churchmen, the exception rather than the rule. In the age of Leo, moreover, the humanists as a class had ceased to exist, merged in the general culture of the nation. Their successors were for the most part cardinals and bishops, elevated to high rank for literary merit. This change, however, really indicated the complete triumph of an ideal that for a moment had succeeded in paganising the Papacy, and substituting its own standard of excellence for ecclesiastical tradition.

This external separation between the humanists and the Church corresponded to their deep internal irreligiousness. If contemporary testimony be needed to support this assertion, I may quote freely from Lilius Gyraldus, Battista Mantovano, and Ariosto, not to mention the invectives that record so vast a mass of almost incredible licentiousness. A rhetorical treatise, addressed to Gian Francesco Pico by Lilius Gyraldus, himself an eminent professor at Ferrara, acquaints us with the opinion formed in Italy, after a century's experience, of the vices and discordant lives of scholars.<sup>3</sup> 'I call God and men to witness,' he writes, 'whether it be possible to find men more affected by immoderate disturbances of soul, by such emotions as the Greeks called πάθος, or by such desires as they named ὁρμαί, more easily influenced, driven about, and drawn in all directions. No class of human beings are more subject to anger, more puffed up with vanity, more

<sup>3</sup> *Progymnasma adversus Literatos. Op. Omn.*, Basle, 1582, vol. ii.

arrogant, more insolent, more proud, conceited, idle-minded, inconsequent, opinionated, changeable, obstinate; some of them ready to believe the most incredible nonsense, others sceptical about notorious truths, some full of doubt and suspicion, others void of reasonable circumspection. None are of a less free spirit, and that for the very reason I have touched before because they think themselves so far more powerful. They all of them, indeed, pretend to omniscience, fancy themselves superior to everything, and rate themselves as gods, while we unlearned little men are made of clay and mud, as they maintain.' Having for some space discoursed concerning their mad ways of life, Gyraldus proceeds to arraign the humanists in detail for vicious passions, want of economy, impiety, gluttony, intemperance, sloth, and incontinence.<sup>4</sup> This invective reads like a paradoxical thesis supported for the sake of novelty by a clever rhetorician; and, indeed, it might pass for such were it not for the confirmation it receives in Ariosto's seventh satire addressed to Pietro Bembo.<sup>5</sup> The poet, anxious to find a tutor for his son, dares not commit the young man to the care of a humanist. His picture of their personal immorality, impiety, pride, and gluttony acquires weight from the well-known tolerance of the satirist, and from his genial parsimony of expression. To cite further testimony from the personal confessions of Pacificus Maximus would hardly strengthen the arguments, though students may be referred to his poems for details.<sup>6</sup>

The alternations of fortune to which the humanists were exposed—living at one time in the lap of luxury, caressed and petted; then cast forth to wander in almost total indigence, neglected and derided—encouraged a Bohemian recklessness injurious to good manners. Their frequent change of place told upon their character in the same way, by exposing them to fresh temptations and withdrawing them from censure. They had no country but the dreamland of antiquity, no laws beyond the law of taste and inclination. They acknowledged no authority superior to their own exalted judgment; they bowed to no tribunal but that of posterity and the past. Thus they lived within their own conceits, outside of custom and opinion; nor was the world, at any rate before the period of their downfall, scrupulous to count their errors or correct their vices.

Far more important, however, than these circumstances was their passion for a Pagan ideal. The study of the classics and the effort to assimilate the spirit of the ancients, undermined their Christianity without substituting the religion or the ethics of the old world. They ceased to fear God; but they did not acquire either the self-restraint

<sup>4</sup> 'Pudet me, Pice, pigetque id de literatis afferre quod omnium tamen est in ore, nullos esse cum omnium vitiorum etiam nefandissimorum genere inquinatos magis, tum iis præcipue, quæ præter naturam dicuntur,' &c.—*Progymnasma adversus Literatos*, p. 431.

<sup>5</sup> Lines 22-120.

<sup>6</sup> *Quinque Illustrium Poetarum Lusus in Venerem*, Parisiis, 1791, p. 107.

of the Greek or the patriotic virtues of the Roman. Thus exposed without defence or safeguard, they adopted the perilous attitude of men whose regulative principle was literary taste, who had left the ground of faith and popular convention for the shoals and shallows of an irrecoverable past. On this sea they wandered, with no guidance but the promptings of undisciplined self. It is not, therefore, a marvel that, while professing Stoicism, they wallowed in sensuality, openly affected the worst habits of Pagan society, and devoted their ingenuity to the explanation of foulness that might have been passed by in silence. Licentiousness became a special branch of humanistic literature. Under the thin mask of humane refinement leered the untamed savage; and an age that boasted not unreasonably of its mental progress, was at the same time notorious for the vices that disgrace mankind. These disorders of the scholars, hidden for a time beneath a learned language, ended by contaminating the genius of the nation. The vernacular *Capitoli* of Florence say plainly what Beccadelli, Poggio, and Bembo piqued themselves on veiling.

Another notable defect of the humanists, equally inseparable from the position they assumed in Italy, was their personal and professional vanity. Battista Mantovano, writing on the calamities of the age in which he lived, reckons them among the most eminent examples of pride in his catalogue of the deadly sins. Regarding themselves as resuscitators of a glorious past and founders of a new civility, they were not satisfied with asserting their real merits in the sphere of scholarship. They went further, and claimed to rank as sages, political philosophers, writers of deathless histories, and singers of immortal verse. The most miserable poetasters got crowned with laurels. The most trivial thinkers passed verdict upon statecraft. Mistaking mere cultivation for genius, they believed that, because they had perused the authors of antiquity and could imitate Ovid at a respectful distance, their fame would endure for all ages. On the strength of this confidence they gave themselves inconceivable airs, looking down from the height of their attainment on the profane crowd. To understand that, after all, antiquity was a school wherein to train the modern intellect for genuine production, was not given to this epoch of discovery. Posterity has sadly belied their expectations. Of all their treatises and commentaries, poems and translations, how few are now remembered; how rarely are their names upon the lips of even professed students! The debt of gratitude we owe them is indeed great, and should be amply paid by our respectful memory of all they wrought for us with labour in the field of learning. Yet Filelfo would turn with passionate disappointment in his grave, if he could know that men of wider scope and sounder erudition appreciate his writings solely as shed leaves that fertilised the soil of literature.

Before turning, as is natural at this point, to form an estimate of the humanists in their capacity of authors, it will be right briefly to qualify the condemnation passed upon their characters. Taken as a

class, they deserve the hardest words that have been said of them. Yet it must not be forgotten that they numbered in their ranks such men as Ambrogio Traversari, Tommaso da Sarzana, Guarino, Jacopo Antiquari, Vittorino da Feltre, Pomponius Lætus, Ficino, Pico, Fabio Calvi, and Aldus Manutius. The bare enumeration of these names will suffice for those who have read the preceding chapters. Piety, sobriety of morals, self-devotion to public interests, the purest literary enthusiasm, the most lofty aspirations, fairness of judgment, and generosity of feeling distinguish these men, and some others who might be mentioned, from the majority of their fellows. Nor, again, is it fair to charge the humanists alone with vices common to their age. The picture I ventured to draw of Papal and despotic manners in a previous volume, shows that a too strict standard cannot be applied to scholars, holding less responsible positions than their patrons, and professing a far looser code of conduct. Much, too, of their inordinate vanity may be ascribed to the infatuation of the people. Such scenes as the reception of the supposed author of 'Hermaphroditus' in Vicenza were enough to turn the heads of even stronger men.<sup>7</sup>

It is difficult to appraise humanistic literature at a just value, seeing that by far the larger mass of it, after serving a purpose of temporary utility, is now forgotten. Not itself, but its effect, is what we have to estimate; and the ultimate product of the whole movement was the creation of a new capacity for cultivation. To have restored to Europe the knowledge of the classics, and to have recovered the style of the ancients, so as to use Latin prose and verse with freedom at a time when Latin formed an universal medium of culture, is the first real merit of the humanists. Nothing can rob them of this glory; however much we may be forced to feel that their critical labours have been superseded, that their dissertations are dull, that their poems at the worst fall far below the level of an Oxford prize exercise, and at the best supply a decent appendix to the 'Corpus Poetarum.' Nor can we defraud them of the fame of having striven to realise Petrarch's ideal.<sup>8</sup> That ideal, only partially attained at any single point, developed in one direction by Milton, in another by Goethe, still guides, and will long guide, the efforts of the modern intellect.

The most salient characteristic of this literature was study of style. The beginners of the humanistic movement were conscious that what separated them more than anything else from their Roman ancestors was want of elegance in diction. They used the same language; but they used it clumsily. They could think the same thoughts, but they had lost the art of expressing them with propriety. To restore style was therefore a prime object. Exaggerating its importance, they neglected the matter for the form, and ended by producing a literature of imitation. The ideal they proposed in composition included limpidity of language, simplicity in the structure of sentences however

<sup>7</sup> See above, p. 446, note 57.

<sup>8</sup> See above, Chapter II.

lengthy, choiceness of phrase, and a copious vocabulary. To be intelligible was the first requisite; to be attractive the second. Having mastered elementary difficulties, they proceeded to fix the rules for decorative writing. Cicero had said that nothing was so ugly or so common but that rhetoric could lend it charm. This unfortunate dictum, implying that style, as separate from matter, is valuable in and for itself, led the Italians astray. To form commonplace books of phrases culled from the 'Tusculans' and the 'Orations,' to choose some trivial theme for treatment, and to make it the occasion for verbal display, became their business. In the coteries of Rome and Florence scholars measured one another by their ingenuity—in other words, by their aptness for producing Ciceronian and Virgilian centos. Few indeed, like Pico, raised their voices against such trifling, or protested that what a man thought and felt was at least as important as his power of clothing it in rhetoric.

The appearance of Valla's 'Elegantiae' marked an epoch in the evolution of this stylistic art. It reached its climax in the work of Bembo. What the humanists intended, they achieved. Purity and perspicuity of language were made conditions of all literature that claimed attention; nor is it, perhaps, too much to say that Racine, Pascal, and Voltaire owe something of their magic to the training of these worn-out pedagogues. Yet the immediate effect in Italy, when Machiavelli's vigour had passed out of the nation, and the stylistic tradition survived, was deplorable. Nothing strikes a northern student of the post-Renaissance authors more than the empty smoothness of their writing, their faculty of saying nothing with a vast expenditure of phrase, their dread of homely details, and the triviality of the subjects they chose for illustration. When a man of wit like Annibale Caro could rise to praise the nose of the president before a learned academy in periods of this ineptitude—'Naso perfetto, naso principale, naso divino, naso che benedetto sia fra tutti i nasi; e benedetta sia quella mamma che vi fece così nasuto, e benedette tutte quelle cose che voi annusate!'<sup>9</sup>—we trace no more than a burlesque of humanistic seeking after style. It must, however, be admitted that it is not easy for a less artistic nation to do the Italians justice in this respect. They derived an æsthetic pleasure from refinements of speech and subtle flavours of expression, while they remained no less conscious than we are that the workmanship surpassed the matter. The proper analogue to their rhetoric may be found in the exquisite but too unmeaning arabesques in marble and in wood, which belong to Cinque Cento architecture. Viewed as the playthings of skilled artists, these are not without their value; and we are apt, perhaps, unduly to depreciate them, because we lack the sense for their particular form of beauty.

<sup>9</sup> 'Perfect nose, imperial nose, divine nose, nose to be blessed among all noses; and blessed be the breasts that made you with a nose so lordly, and blessed be all those things you put your nose to!' The above is quoted from Cantù's *Storia della Letteratura Italiana*. I have not seen the actual address.

If the most marked feature of humanistic literature was the creation of a Latin style, the supreme dictators were Cicero in prose and Virgil in verse. That Cicero should have fascinated the Italians in an age when art was dominant, when richness of decoration, rhetorical fluency, and pomp of phrase appealed to the liveliest instincts of a splendour-loving, sensitive, declamatory race, is natural. The Renaissance found exactly what it wanted in the manner of the most obviously eloquent of Latin authors, himself a rhetorician among philosophers, an orator among statesmen, the weakness of whose character was akin to that which lay at the root of fifteenth-century society. To be the 'apes of Cicero,' in all the branches of literature he had cultivated, was regarded by the humanists as a religious duty.<sup>10</sup> Though they had no place in the senate, the pulpit, or the law court, they were fain to imitate his oratory. Therefore public addresses to ambassadors, to magistrates on assuming office, and to Popes on their election; epithalamial and funeral discourses; panegyrics and congratulations—sounded far and wide through Italy. The fifteenth century was the golden age of speechification. A man was measured by the amount of fluent Latinity he could pour forth; copiousness of quotations secured applause; and readiness to answer on the spur of the moment in smooth Ciceronian phrases, was reckoned among the qualities that led to posts of trust in Church and State. On the other hand, a failure of words on any ceremonial occasion passed for one of the great calamities of life. The common name for an envoy, *oratore*, sufficiently indicates the public importance attached to rhetoric. It formed a necessary part of the parade which the Renaissance loved, and, more than that, a part of its diplomatic machinery. To compose orations that could never be recited as a fashionable exercise; and since the 'Verrines' and the 'Philippics' existed, no occasion was lost for reproducing something of their spirit in the invectives whereof so much has been already said. The emptiness of all this oratory, separated from the solid concerns of life, and void of actual value, tended to increase the sophistic character of literature. Eloquence, which ought to owe its force to passionate emotion or to gravity of meaning, degenerated into a mere play of words; and to such an extent was verbal cleverness over-estimated, that a scholar could ascribe the fame of Julius Cæsar to his 'Commentaries' rather than his victories.<sup>11</sup> It does not seem to have occurred to him that Pompey would have been glad if Cæsar had always wielded his pen, and that Brutus would hardly have stabbed a friendly man of letters. When we read a genuine humanistic speech, we find that it is principally composed of trite tales and citations. To play upon the texts of antiquity, as a pianist upon the keys of his instrument, was no small part of eloquence; and the music sounded pleasant in ears greedy of the very titles of old writings.

<sup>10</sup> The phrase is eulogistically used by F. Villani in his *Life of Coluccio Salutato*.

<sup>11</sup> See Muratori, vol. xx. 442, 453.



Vespasiano mentions that Carlo Aretino owed his early fame at Florence to one lecture, introducing references to all the classic authors.

The style affected for moral dissertation was in like manner Ciceronian. The dialogue in particular became fashionable; and since it was dangerous to introduce matter unsuited to Tully's phrases, these disquisitions are usually devoid of local colouring and contemporary interest. Few have such value as attaches to the opening of Poggio's essay on Fortune, to Valeriano's treatise on the misfortunes of the learned, or to Giraldi's attack upon the humanists.

Another important branch of literature, modelled upon Ciceronian masterpieces, was letter-writing. The epistolography of the humanists might form a separate branch of study, if we cared to trace its history through several stages, and to sift the stores at our disposal. Petrarch, after discovering the familiar letters of the Roman orator, first gave an impulse to this kind of composition. In his old age he tells how he was laughed at in his youth for assuming the Latin style of thou together with the Roman form of superscription.<sup>12</sup> I have already touched upon the currency it gained through the practice of Coluccio Salutato and the teaching of Gasparino da Barzizza.<sup>13</sup> In course of time books of formulæ and polite letter-writers were compiled, enabling novices to adopt the Ciceronian mannerism with safety.<sup>14</sup> The Papal Curia sanctioned a set of precedents for the guidance of its secretaries, while the epistles of eminent chancellors served as models for the despatches of republican governments.

The private letters of scholars were useful in keeping up communication between the several centres of culture in Italy. From these sources too we now derive much interesting information respecting the social life of the humanists. They seem to have avoided political, theological, and practical topics, cultivating a style of urbane compliment, exchanging opinions about books, asking small favours, acknowledging obligations, recommending friends to favourable notice, occasionally describing their mode of life, discussing the qualities of their patrons with cautious reserve, but seeking above all things to display grace of diction and elegant humour rather than erudition. The fact that these Latin epistles were invariably intended for circulation and ultimate publication, renders it useless to seek for insight from them into strictly private matters.<sup>15</sup> For the historian the most valuable collection of

<sup>12</sup> *Epist. Rer. Senil.* xv. 1. 'Styli hujus per Italiam non auctor quidem, sed instaurator ipse mihi videor, quo cum uti inciperem, adolescens a coætaneis irridebar, qui in hoc ipso certatim me postea sunt secuti.'

<sup>13</sup> See above, pp. 377-379.

<sup>14</sup> Gian Maria Filelfo, son of the celebrated professor, published an *Epistolarium* of this kind.

<sup>15</sup> Francesco Filelfo, quoted in Rosmini's Life, vol. ii. pp. 304, 282, 448, writes, 'Le cose che non voglio sieno copiate, le scrivo sempre alla grossolana.' 'Hoc autem scribendi more utimur iis in rebus quarum memoriam nolumus transferre ad posteros. Et ethrusca quidem lingua vix toti Italiæ nota est, at latina oratio longe ac late per universum orbem est diffusa.' ('Matters I do not wish to have copied I always write off

Renaissance letters are composed in Italian, and are not usually the work of scholars, but of agents, spies, and envoys. Compared with the reports of the Venetian ambassadors, the correspondence of the humanists is unimportant. In addition to familiar letters, it not unfrequently happened, however, that epistles upon topics of public interest were indited by students. Intended by their diffusion to affect opinion, and addressed to influential friends or patrons, these compositions assumed the form of pamphlets. Of this kind were the letters on the Eastern question sent by Filelfo to Charles VII. of France, to the Emperor, to Matthias Corvinus, to the Dukes of Burgundy and Urbino, and to the Doge of Venice. The immortality expected by the humanists from their epistles has hardly fallen to their lot; though much of Poliziano's, Pico's, Antiquari's, and Piccolomini's correspondence is still delightful and instructive reading. The masses extant in MS. exceed what has been printed; while the printed volumes, with some rare exceptions, among which may be mentioned Poliziano's letter to Antiquari on the death of Lorenzo, are only used by students.<sup>16</sup>

Since Cicero had left no specimen of history, the humanists were driven to follow other masters in this branch of literature. Livy was the author of their predilection. Cæsar supplied them with a model for the composition of commentaries, and Sallust for concise monographs. Suetonius was followed in such minute studies of character as Decembrio's 'Life of Filippo Maria Visconti.' I do not find that Tacitus had any thoroughgoing imitators; the magniloquence of rhetoric, rather than the pungency of sarcasm, suited the taste of the age. The faults of the humanistic histories have been already pointed out.<sup>17</sup>

The services of the humanists as commentators, translators, critics of text, compilers of grammars and dictionaries of all kinds, collectors of miscellaneous information, and writers on antiquities, still remain to be remembered. Their industry in this field was quite different from the labour they devoted to the perfecting of style. Whatever we may think of them as men of letters, we are bound to give their erudition almost unqualified praise. Not, indeed, that their learning any more than their literature was final. It too has been superseded; but it formed the basis of a sounder method, and rendered the attainment of more certain knowledge possible. It is not too much to say that modern culture, so far as it is derived from antiquity, owes everything to the indefatigable energy of the humanists. Before the age of printing, scholars had to store their memories with encyclopædic information, while the very want of a critical method, by preventing them from exactly discerning the good and the bad, enabled them to

in the vulgar. This style I use for such things as I do not care to transmit to posterity. Tuscan, to be sure, is hardly known to all Italians, while Latin is spread far and wide through the whole world.')

<sup>16</sup> See Voigt, pp. 421, 422, for an account of Filelfo's, Traversari's, Barbaro's, and Bruni's letters.

<sup>17</sup> See Vol. I., *Age of the Despots*, pp. 138, 139, and above, p. 569.

take a broader and more comprehensive view of classical literature than is now at any rate common. Antiquity as a whole—not the authors merely of the Attic age or the Augustan—claimed their admiration; and though they devoted special study to Cicero and Virgil for the purposes of style, they eagerly accepted every Greek or Latin composition from the earliest to the latest. To this omnivorous appetite of the elder scholars we are perhaps indebted for the preservation of many fragrant which a more delicate taste would have rejected. Certainly we owe to them the conception of the classics in their totality, as forming the proper source of culture for the human race. The purism of Vida and Bembo, though it sprang from more refined perceptions, was in some respects a retrogression from the wide and liberal erudition of their predecessors. Discipleship under Virgil may make a versifier; but he who would fain comprehend the Latin genius must know the poets of Rome from Ennius to Claudian.

Finally we have to render the tribute due to the humanists for their diffusion of a liberal spirit. Sustained by the enthusiasm of antiquity, they first ventured to take a standpoint outside catholicity; and though they made but bad use of this spiritual freedom, inclining to levity and godlessness instead of fighting the battle of the reason, yet their large and human survey of the world was in itself invigorating. Poggio at the Council of Constance regarded Jerome of Prague not as a heretic, not as a fanatic, but as a Stoic. In other words, he was capable of divesting his mind of temporary associations and conventional prejudices, and of discerning the true character of the man who suffered heroically for his opinions. This instance illustrates the general tone and temper of the humanists. Their study of antiquity freed them from the scholastic pedantries of theologians, and from the professional conceits of jurists and physicians. There is nothing great and noble in human nature that might not, we fancy, have grown and thriven under their direction, if the circumstances of Italy had been more favourable to high aspirations. As it was, the light was early quenched and clouded by base vapours of a sensual, enslaved, and priest-corrupted society. The vital force of the Revival passed into the Reformation; the humanists, degraded and demoralised, were superseded. Still it was they who created the new atmosphere of culture, wherein whatever is luminous in art, literature, science, criticism, and religion has since flourished. Though we may perceive that they obeyed a false authority—that of the classics, and worshipped a false idol—style, yet modern liberty must render them the meed of thanks for this. When we consider that before the sixteenth century had closed, they had imbued the whole Italian nation with their views, forming a new literature, directing every kind of mental activity, and producing a new social tone, and furthermore that Italy in the sixteenth century impressed her spirit on the rest of Europe, we have a right to hail the humanists as the schoolmasters of modern civilisation.

As schoolmasters in a stricter sense of the term, it is not easy to

exaggerate the influence exercised by Italian students. They first conceived and framed the education that has now prevailed through Europe for four centuries, moulding the youth of divers nations by one common discipline, and establishing an intellectual concord for all peoples. In spite of changes in government and creed, in spite of differences caused by race and language, we have maintained an uniformity of culture through the simultaneous prosecution of classic studies on the lines laid down for teachers by the scholars of the fifteenth century. The system of our universities and public schools is in truth no other than that devised by Vittorino and Guarino. Thus humanism in modern Europe has continued the work performed during the Middle Ages by the Church, uniting in one confederation of spiritual activity nations widely separated by all that tends to keep the human families apart.

Until quite recently in England, the *litteræ humaniores* were accepted as the soundest training for careers in Church and State, for the learned professions, and for the private duties of gentlemen. If the old ideal is yielding at last to theories of a wider education based on science and on modern languages, that is due partly to the extension of useful knowledge, and partly to the absorption of classic literature into the modern consciousness. The sum of what a cultivated man should know, in order to maintain a place among the pioneers of progress, is so vast, that learners, distracted by a variety of subjects, resent the expenditure of precious time on Greek and Latin. Teachers, on the other hand, through long familiarity with humane studies, have fallen into the language of routine. Besides, as knowledge in each new department increases, the necessity of specialising with a view to adopting a professional career, makes itself continually felt with greater urgency. It may therefore be plausibly argued that we have outgrown the conditions of humanism, and that a new stage in the history of education has been reached. Have not the ancients done as much for us as they can do? Are not our minds permeated with their thoughts? Do not the masterpieces of modern literature hold in solution the best that can be got from them for future uses?

These questions can perhaps be met by the counter-question whether the arts and letters of the Greeks and Romans will not always hold their own, not only in the formation of pure taste, but also in the discipline of character and the training of the intelligence. Just as well might we cease to study the sacred books of the Jews, because we have incorporated their ethics into our conscience, and possess their religion in our liturgy. No transmission of a spirit at second or third hand can be the same as its immediate contact; nor can we afford, however full our mental life may be, to lose the vivid sense of what men were and what they wrought in ages far removed from us, especially when those men were our superiors in certain spheres. Again, it may be doubted whether we should understand the masterpieces of modern literature, when we came to be separated from the sources of

their inspiration. If Olympus connoted less than Asgard, or Hercules were no more familiar to our minds than Rustem, or the horses of the Sun stood at the same distance from us as the cows of Indra—if, in fact, we abandoned Greek as much as we have abandoned Scandinavian, Persian, and Sanskrit mythology, would not some of the most brilliant images of our own poets fade into leaden greyness, like clouds that have lost the flush of living light upon them?

It is therefore not improbable that for many years to come the higher culture of the race will still be grounded upon humanism: true though it be that the first enthusiasm for antiquity shall never be restored, nor the classics yield that vital nourishment they offered in the spring-time of the modern era. For average students, who have no special vocation for literature and no æsthetic tastes, it may well happen that new methods of teaching the classics will have to be invented. Why should they not be read in English versions, and the time expended upon Greek and Latin grammar be thus saved? The practice of Greek and Latin versification has been virtually doomed already; nor is there any reason why Latin prose should form a necessary part of education in an age that has ceased to publish its thoughts in a now completely dead language. Our actual relation to the ancients, again, justifies some change. We know far more about them now than in the period of the Renaissance; but they are no longer all in all for civilised humanity, eager to reconstitute the realm of thought, and find its nobler self anew in the image of a glorious past, reconquered and inalienable. The very culture created by the study of antiquity through the last four centuries stands between them and our apprehension, so that they seem at the same moment more distinct from us and more a part of our familiar selves.

When we seek the causes which produced the decay of learning in Italy about the middle of the sixteenth century, we are first led to observe that the type of scholarship inaugurated by Petrarch had been fully developed. Nothing new remained to be worked out upon the lines laid down by him. Meanwhile the forces of the nation, both creative and receptive, were exhausted in the old fields of humanism. The reading public had been glutted with epistles, invectives, poems, orations, histories of antiquities, and disquisitions of all kinds. The matter of the ancient literatures had been absorbed, if superficially, at least entirely, and their forms had been reproduced with wearisome reiteration. The Paganism that had so long ruled as a fashion, was now passing out of vogue, because of its inadequacy to meet the deeper wants and satisfy the aspirations of the modern world. The humanists, moreover, as a class, had fallen into disrepute through faults and vices whereof enough has been already said. Nothing short of the new impulse which a new genius, equal at least in power to Petrarch, might have communicated, could have given a fresh direction to the declining enthusiasm for antiquity. But for this display of energy the Italians were not prepared. As in the ascent of some

high peak, the traveller, after surmounting pine woods and Alpine pastures, comes upon bare grassy slopes that form an intermediate region between the basements of the mountain and the snowfields overhead, so the humanists had accomplished the first stage of learning. But it requires a fresh start and the employment of other faculties to scale the final heights; and for this the force was wanting. Erasmus, at the opening of the century, had, indeed, initiated a second age of scholarship. The more exact methods of criticism and comparison were already about to be instituted by the French, the Germans, and the Dutch. It was too much, however, to expect that the Italians, who had expended their vigour in recovering the classics and reviving a passion for knowledge, should compete upon the ground of modern erudition with these fresh and untried races.

What they might have done, if circumstances had been less unfavourable, and if the way of progress had been free before them, cannot be conjectured. As it was, all things contributed to the decline of intellectual energy in Italy. The distracting wars of half a century told more heavily upon the literati, who depended for their very existence upon the liberality of patrons, than on any other section of the people. What miseries they endured in Lombardy may be gathered from the prefaces and epistles of Aldus Manutius; while the blow inflicted on them by the sack of Rome is vividly described by Valeriano.<sup>18</sup> When comparative peace was restored, liberty had been extinguished. Florence, the stronghold of liberal learning, was enslaved. Scholarship no less than art suffered from the loss of political independence. Rome, terror-stricken by the Reformation, turned with rage against the very studies she had helped to stimulate. The engines of the Inquisition, wielded with all the mercilessness of panic by men who had the sombre cruelty of Spain to back them up, destroyed the germs of life in science and philosophy.

To some extent, again, the Italian scholars had prepared their own suicide by tending more and more to subtleties of taste and affectations of refinement. The purism of the sixteenth century was itself a sort of etiolation, and the puerilities of the academies distracted even able men from serious studies. It was one of the inevitable drawbacks of humanism that the new culture separated men of letters from the nation. Dante and the wool-carders of the fourteenth century understood each other; there was then no thick veil of erudition between the teacher and the taught. But neither Bembo nor Pomponazzi had anything to say that could be comprehended by the common folk. Therefore scholarship was left in mournful isolation; suspected, when it passed from trifles to grave speculations, by the Church; viewed with indifference by the people; unsustained by any sympathy, and, what was worse, without a programme or a watchword. The thinkers, whose biography belongs to the history of the Counter-

<sup>18</sup> See above, p. 532.

Reformation in Italy, were all solitary men, voices crying in the wilderness with none to listen, bound together by no common bond, unnoticed by the nation, extinguished singly on the scaffold by an ever-watchful league of tyrants spiritual and political.

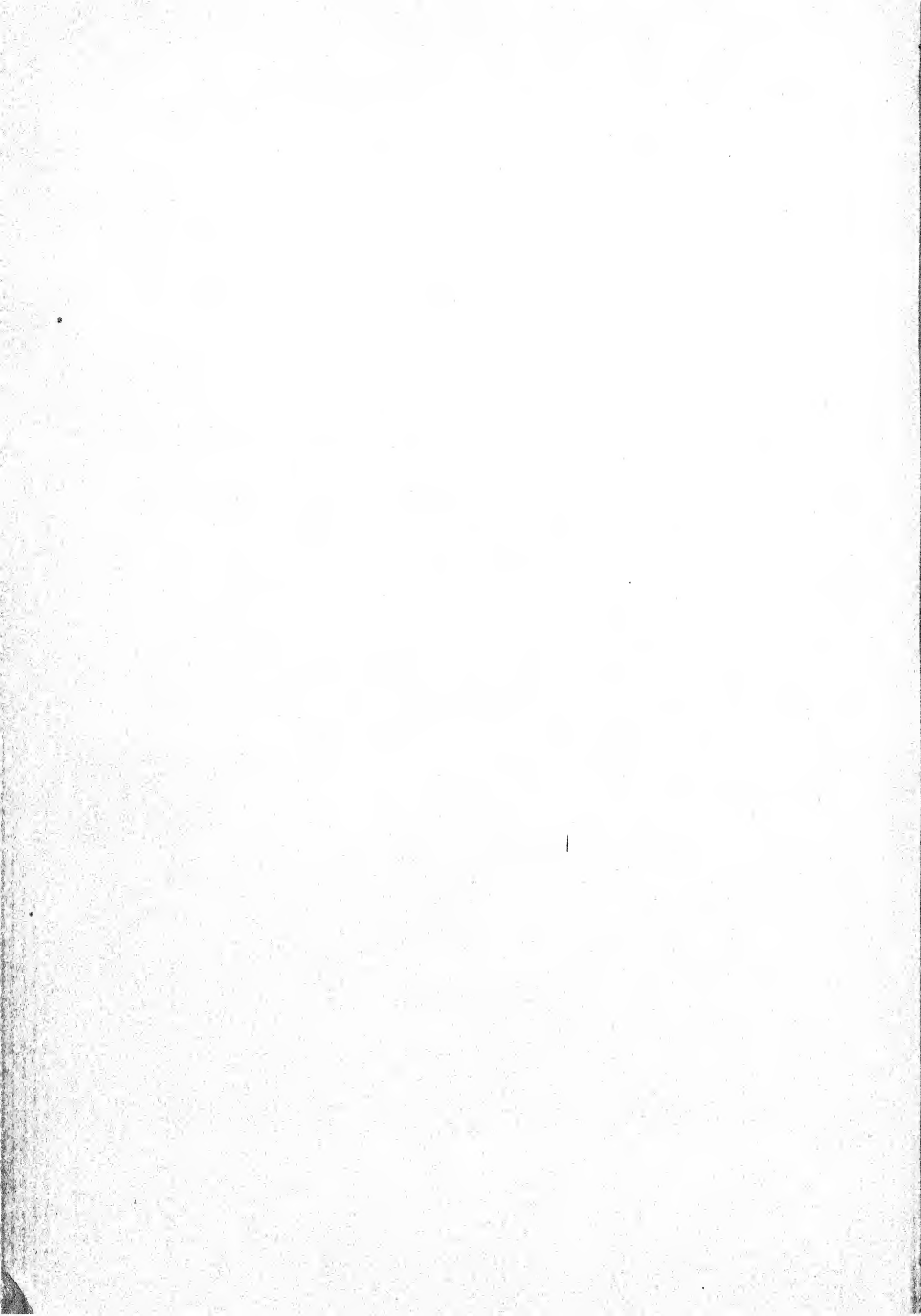
Before the end of the sixteenth century Greek had almost ceased to be studied in Italy. This was the sign of intellectual death. All that was virile in humanism fled beyond the Alps. This transference of intellectual supremacy from Italy to Germany was speedily accomplished. 'When I was a boy,' said Erasmus,<sup>19</sup> 'sound letters had begun to revive among the Italians; but by reason of the printer's art being as yet undiscovered or known to few, no books had reached us, and in the deep tranquillity of dulness there reigned a set of men who taught in all our towns the most illiterate learning. Rodolph Agricola was the first to bring to us from Italy some breath of a superior culture.' Again, he says of Italy, 'In that land, where even the very walls are both more learned and more eloquent than men with us; so that what here seems beautifully said, and elegant and full of charm, cannot be held for aught but clumsy, stupid, and uncultivated there.' Less than half a century after Erasmus had gained the right to hold the balance thus between the nations of the North and South—that is, in 1540 or thereabouts—Paolo Giovio, at the close of his 'Elogia Literaria,' while speaking of the Germans, felt obliged to confess that 'not only Latin letters, to our disgrace, but Greek and Hebrew also have passed into their territory by a fatal simultaneous migration.'

Thus Italy, after receiving the lamp of learning from the dying hands of Hellas, in the days of her own freedom, now, in the time of her adversity and ruin, gave it to the nations of the North. Her work was ended. Three centuries of increasing decrepitude, within our recent memory at length most happily surmounted, were before her. Can history, we wonder, furnish a spectacle more pathetic than that of the protagonist of spiritual liberty falling uneasily asleep beneath the footstool of the Spaniard and the churchman, while the races who had trampled her to death went on rejoicing in the light and culture she had won by centuries of toil? This is the tragic aspect of the subject which has occupied us through the present volume. At the conclusion of the whole matter it is, however, more profitable to remember, not the intellectual death of Italy, but what she wrought in that bright period of her vigour. She was the divinely appointed birthplace of the modern spirit, the workshop of knowledge for all Europe, our mistress in the arts and sciences, the Alma Mater of our student years, the well-spring of mental freedom and activity after ages of stagnation. If greater philosophers have since been produced by Germany and France and England, greater scholars, greater men of science, greater poets even, and greater pioneers of progress in the lands divined by Christopher Columbus beyond the seas—this

<sup>19</sup> See the passages quoted by Tiraboschi, vol. vi. lib. iii. cap. v. 71.



must not blind us to the truth that at the very outset of the era in which we live and play our parts, Italy embraced all philosophy, all scholarships, all science, all art, all discovery, alone. Such is the Lampadephoria, or torch-race, of the nations. Greece stretches forth her hand to Italy; Italy consigns the sacred fire to Northern Europe; the people of the North pass on the flame to America, to India, and the Australasian isles.



## THE FINE ARTS

Dii Romæ indigetes, Trojæ tuque auctor, Apollo,  
Unde genus nostrum cœli se tollit ad astra,  
Hanc saltem auferri laudem prohibete Latinis:  
Artibus emineat semper, studiisque Minervæ,  
Italia, et gentes doceat pulcherrima Roma;  
Quandoquidem armorum penitus fortuna recessit,  
Tanta Italos inter crevit discordia reges;  
Ipsi nos inter sævos dstringimus enses,  
Nec patriam pudet externis aperire tyrannis

VIDA, *Poetica*, lib. ii.



## PREFACE<sup>1</sup>

THIS third volume of my book on the 'Renaissance in Italy' does not pretend to retrace the history of the Italian arts, but rather to define their relation to the main movement of Renaissance culture. Keeping this, the chief object of my whole work, steadily in view, I have tried to explain the dependence of the arts on mediæval Christianity at their commencement, their gradual emancipation from ecclesiastical control, and their final attainment of freedom at the moment when the classical revival culminated.

Not to notice the mediæval period in this evolution would be impossible; since the revival of Sculpture and Painting at the end of the thirteenth century was among the earliest signs of that new intellectual birth to which we give the title of Renaissance. I have, therefore, had to deal at some length with stages in the development of Architecture, Sculpture, and Painting, which form a prelude to the proper age of my own history.

In studying the architectural branch of the subject, I have had recourse to Fergusson's 'Illustrated Handbook of Architecture,' to Burckhardt's 'Cicerone,' to Grüner's 'Terra-Cotta Buildings of North Italy,' to Milizia's 'Memorie degli Architetti,' and to many illustrated works on single buildings in Rome, Tuscany, Lombardy, and Venice. For the history of Sculpture I have used Burckhardt's 'Cicerone,' and the two important works of Charles C. Perkins, entitled 'Tuscan Sculptors,' and 'Italian Sculptors.' Such books as 'Le Tre Porte del Battistero di Firenze,' Grüner's 'Cathedral of Orvieto,' and Lasinio's 'Tabernacolo della Madonna d'Orsammichele' have been helpful by their illustrations. For the history of Painting I have made use principally of Vasari's 'Vite de' più eccellenti Pittori,' &c., in Lé Monnier's edition of Crowe and Cavalcaselle's 'History of Painting,' of Burckhardt's 'Cicerone,' of Rosini's illustrated 'Storia della Pittura Italiana,' of Rio's 'L'Art Chrétien,' and of Henri Beyle's 'Histoire de la Peinture en Italie.' I should, however, far exceed the limits of a preface were I to make a list of all the books I have consulted with profit on the history of the arts in Italy.

In this part of my work I feel that I owe less to reading than to observation. I am not aware of having mentioned any important building, statue, or picture which I have not had the opportunity of studying. What I have written in this volume about the monuments of Italian art has always been first noted face to face with the originals,

<sup>1</sup> To the original edition of this volume.

and afterwards corrected, modified, or confirmed in the course of subsequent journeys to Italy. I know that this method of composition, if it has the merit of freshness, entails some inequality of style and disproportion in the distribution of materials. In the final preparation of my work for press I have therefore endeavoured, as far as possible, to compensate this disadvantage by adhering to the main motive of my subject—the illustration of the Renaissance spirit as this was manifested in the Arts.

I must add, in conclusion, that Chapters VII. and IX. and Appendix II. are in part reprinted from the 'Westminister,' the 'Cornhill,' and the 'Contemporary.'

CLIFTON: *March* 1877.

## CHAPTER I

### THE PROBLEM FOR THE FINE ARTS

*Art in Italy and Greece—The Leading Phase of Culture—Æsthetic Type of Literature—Painting the Supreme Italian Art—Its Task in the Renaissance—Christian and Classical Traditions—Sculpture for the Ancients—Painting for the Romance Nations—Medieval Faith and Superstition—The Promise of Painting—How far can the Figurative Arts express Christian Ideas?—Greek and Christian Religion—Plastic Art incapable of solving the Problem—A more Emotional Art needed—Place of Sculpture in the Renaissance—Painting and Christian Story—Humanisation of Ecclesiastical Ideas by Art—Hostility of the Spirit of True Piety to Art—Compromises effected by the Church—Fra Bartolommeo's S. Sebastian—Irreconcilability of Art and Theology, Art and Philosophy—Recapitulation—Art in the end Paganises—Music—The Future of Painting after the Renaissance.*

It has been granted only to two nations, the Greeks and the Italians, and to the latter only at the time of the Renaissance, to invest every phase and variety of intellectual energy with the form of art. Nothing notable was produced in Italy between the thirteenth and the seventeenth centuries that did not bear the stamp and character of fine art. If the methods of science may be truly said to regulate our modes of thinking at the present time, it is no less true that, during the Renaissance, art exercised a like controlling influence. Not only was each department of the fine arts practised with singular success; not only was the national genius to a very large extent absorbed in painting, sculpture, and architecture; but the æsthetic impulse was more subtly and widely diffused than this alone would imply. It possessed the Italians in the very centre of their intellectual vitality, imposing its conditions on all the manifestations of their thought and feeling, so that even their shortcomings may be ascribed in a great measure to their inability to quit the æsthetic point of view.

We see this in their literature. It is probable that none but artistic natures will ever render full justice to the poetry of the Renaissance. Critics endowed with a less lively sensibility to beauty of outline and to harmony of form than the Italians, complain that their poetry lacks substantial qualities; nor is it except by long familiarity with the plastic arts of their contemporaries that we come to understand the ground assumed by Ariosto and Poliziano. We then perceive that these poets were not so much unable as instinctively unwilling to go beyond a certain circle of effects. They subordinated their work to the ideal of their age, and that ideal was one to which a painter rather than a poet might successfully aspire. A succession of pictures,



harmoniously composed and delicately toned to please the mental eye, satisfied the taste of the Italians. But, however exquisite in design, rich in colour, and complete in execution this literary work may be, it strikes a Northern student as wanting in the highest elements of genius—sublimity of imagination, dramatic passion, energy and earnestness of purpose. In like manner, he finds it hard to appreciate those didactic compositions on trifling or prosaic themes, which delighted the Italians for the very reason that their workmanship surpassed their matter. These defects, as we judge them, are still more apparent in the graver branches of literature. In an essay or a treatise we do not so much care for well-balanced disposition of parts or beautifully rounded periods, though elegance may be thought essential to classic masterpieces, as for weighty matter and trenchant observations. Having the latter, we can dispense at need with the former. The Italians of the Renaissance, under the sway of the fine arts, sought after form, and satisfied themselves with rhetoric. Therefore we condemn their moral disquisitions and their criticisms as the flimsy playthings of intellectual voluptuaries. Yet the right way of doing justice to these stylistic trifles is to regard them as products of an all-embracing genius for art, in a people whose most serious enthusiasms were æsthetic.

The speech of the Italians at that epoch, their social habits, their ideal of manners, their standard of morality, the estimate they formed of men, were alike conditioned and qualified by art. It was an age of splendid ceremonies and magnificent parade, when the furniture of houses, the armour of soldiers, the dress of citizens, the pomp of war, and the pageantry of festival were invariably and inevitably beautiful. On the meanest articles of domestic utility, cups and platters, door-panels and chimney-pieces, coverlets for beds and lids of linen-chests, a wealth of artistic invention was lavished by innumerable craftsmen, no less skilled in technical details than distinguished by rare taste. From the Pope upon S. Peter's chair to the clerks in a Florentine counting-house, every Italian was a judge of art. Art supplied the spiritual oxygen, without which the life of the Renaissance must have been atrophied. During that period of prodigious activity the entire nation seemed to be endowed with an instinct for the beautiful, and with the capacity for producing it in every conceivable form. As we travel through Italy at the present day, when 'time, war, pillage, and purchase' have done their worst to denude the country of its treasures, we still marvel at the incomparable and countless beauties stored in every burgh and hamlet. Pacing the picture galleries of Northern Europe, the country seats of English nobles, and the palaces of Spain, the same reflection is still forced upon us: how could Italy have done what she achieved within so short a space of time? What must the houses and the churches once have been, from which these spoils were taken, but which still remain so rich in masterpieces? Psychologically to explain this universal capacity for the fine arts in the nation at this

epoch, is perhaps impossible. Yet the fact remains, that he who would comprehend the Italians of the Renaissance must study their art, and cling fast to that Ariadne-thread throughout the labyrinthine windings of national character. He must learn to recognise that herein lay the sources of their intellectual strength as well as the secret of their intellectual weakness.

It lies beyond the scope of this work to embrace in one inquiry the different forms of art in Italy, or to analyse the connection of the æsthetic instinct with the manifold manifestations of the Renaissance. Even the narrower task to which I must confine myself, is too vast for the limits I am forced to impose upon its treatment. I intend to deal with Italian painting as the one complete product which remains from the achievements of this period, touching upon sculpture and architecture more superficially. Not only is painting the art in which the Italians among all the nations of the modern world stand unapproachably alone, but it is also the one that best enables us to gauge their genius at the time when they impressed their culture on the rest of Europe. In the history of the Italian intellect painting takes the same rank as that of sculpture in the Greek. Before beginning, however, to trace the course of Italian art, it will be necessary to discuss some preliminary questions, important for a right understanding of the relations assumed by painting to the thoughts of the Renaissance, and for explaining its superiority over the sister art of sculpture in that age. This I feel the more bound to do because it is my object in this volume to treat of art with special reference to the general culture of the nation.

What, let us ask in the first place, was the task appointed for the fine arts on the threshold of the modern world? They had, before all things, to give form to the ideas evolved by Christianity, and to embody a class of emotions unknown to the ancients.<sup>1</sup> The inheritance of the Middle Ages had to be appropriated and expressed. In the course of performing this work, the painters helped to humanise religion, and revealed the dignity and beauty of the body of man. Next, in the

<sup>1</sup> It may fairly be questioned whether that necessary connection between art and religion, which is commonly taken for granted, does in truth exist; in other words, whether great art might not flourish without any religious content. This, however, is a speculative problem, for the present and the future rather than the past. Historically, it has always been found that the arts in their origin are dependent on religion. Nor is the reason far to seek. Art aims at expressing an ideal; and this ideal is the transfiguration of human elements into something nobler, felt and apprehended by the imagination. Such an ideal, such an all-embracing glorification of humanity only exists for simple and unsophisticated societies in the form of religion. Religion is the universal poetry which all possess; and the artist, dealing with the mythology of his national belief, feels himself in vital sympathy with the imagination of the men for whom he works. More than the painter is required for the creation of great painting, and more than the poet for the exhibition of immortal verse. Painters are but the hands, and poets but the voices, whereby peoples express their accumulated thoughts and permanent emotions. Behind them crowd the generations of the myth-makers; and around them floats the vital atmosphere of enthusiasms on which their own souls and the souls of their brethren have been nourished.

fifteenth century, the riches of classic culture were discovered, and art was called upon to aid in the interpretation of the ancient to the modern mind. The problem was no longer simple. Christian and pagan traditions came into close contact, and contended for the empire of the newly liberated intellect. During this struggle the arts, true to their own principles, eliminated from both traditions the more strictly human elements, and expressed them in beautiful form to the imagination and the senses. The brush of the same painter depicted Bacchus wedding Ariadne and Mary fainting on the hill of Calvary. Careless of any peril to dogmatic orthodoxy, and undeterred by the dread of encouraging pagan sensuality, the artists wrought out their modern ideal of beauty in the double field of Christian and Hellenic legend. Before the force of painting was exhausted, it had thus traversed the whole cycle of thoughts and feelings that form the content of the modern mind. Throughout this performance, art proved itself a powerful co-agent in the emancipation of the intellect; the impartiality wherewith its methods were applied to subjects sacred and profane, the emphasis laid upon physical strength and beauty as good things and desirable, the subordination of classical and mediæval myths to one æsthetic law of loveliness, all tended to withdraw attention from the differences between paganism and Christianity, and to fix it on the goodness of that humanity wherein both find their harmony.

This being in general the task assigned to art in the Renaissance, we may next inquire what constituted the specific quality of modern as distinguished from antique feeling, and why painting could not fail to take the first place among modern arts. In other words, how was it that, while sculpture was the characteristic fine art of antiquity, painting became the distinguishing fine art of the modern era? No true form of figurative art intervened between Greek sculpture and Italian painting. The latter took up the work of investing thought with sensible shape from the dead hands of the former. Nor had the tradition that connected art with religion been interrupted, although a new cycle of religious ideas had been substituted for the old ones. The late Roman and Byzantine manners, through which the vital energies of the Athenian genius dwindled into barren formalism, still lingered, giving crude and lifeless form to Christian conceptions. But the thinking and feeling subject, meanwhile, had undergone a change so all-important that it now imperatively required fresh channels for its self-expression. It was destined to find these, not as of old in sculpture, but in painting.

During the interval between the closing of the ancient and the opening of the modern age, the faith of Christians had attached itself to symbols and material objects little better than fetishes. The host, the relic, the wonder-working shrine, things endowed with a mysterious potency, evoked the yearning and the awe of mediæval multitudes. To such concrete actualities the worshippers referred their sense of the invisible divinity. The earth of Jerusalem, the Holy Sepulchre, the

House of Loreto, the Sudarium of Saint Veronica, aroused their deepest sentiments of awful adoration. Like Thomas, they could not be contented with believing; they must also touch and handle. At the same time, in apparent contradistinction to this demand for things of sense as signs of supersensual power, the claims of dogma on the intellect grew more imperious, and mysticism opened for the dreaming soul a realm of spiritual rapture. For the figurative arts there was no true place in either of these regions. Painting and sculpture were alike alien to the grosser superstitions, the scholastic subtleties, and the ecstatic trances of the Middle Ages; nor had they anything in common with the logic of theology. Votaries who kissed a fragment of the cross with passion could have found but little to satisfy their ardour in pictures painted by a man of genius. A formless wooden idol, endowed with the virtue of curing disease, charmed the pilgrim more than a statue noticeable only for its beauty or its truth to life. We all know that *wunderthätige Bilder sind meist nur schlechte Gemälde*. In architecture alone, the mysticism of the Middle Ages, their vague but potent feelings of infinity, their yearning towards a deity invisible, but localised in holy things and places, found artistic outlet. Therefore architecture was essentially a mediæval art. The rise of sculpture and painting indicated the quickening to life of new faculties, fresh intellectual interests, and a novel way of apprehending the old substance of religious feeling; for comprehension of these arts implies delight in things of beauty for their own sake, a sympathetic attitude towards the world of sense, a new freedom of the mind produced by the regeneration of society through love.

The mediæval faiths were still vivid when the first Italian painters began their work, and the sincere endeavour of these men was to set forth in beautiful and worthy form the truths of Christianity. The eyes of the worshipper should no longer have a mere stock or stone to contemplate: his imagination should be helped by the dramatic presentation of the scenes of sacred history, and his devotion be quickened by lively images of the passion of our Lord. Spirit should converse with spirit, through no veil of symbol, but through the transparent medium of art, itself instinct with inbreathed life and radiant with ideal beauty. The body and the soul, moreover, should be reconciled; and God's likeness should be once more acknowledged in the features and the limbs of man. Such was the promise of art; and this promise was in a great measure fulfilled by the painting of the fourteenth century. Men ceased to worship their God in the holiness of ugliness; and a great city called its street Glad on the birthday-festival of the first picture investing religious emotion with æsthetic charm. But in making good the promise they had given, it was needful for the arts on the one hand to enter a region not wholly their own—the region of abstractions and of mystical conceptions; and on the other to create a world of sensuous delightfulness, wherein the spiritual element was materialised to the injury of its own essential quality. Spirit, indeed,

spake to spirit, so far as the religious content was concerned; but flesh spake also to flesh in the æsthetic form. The incarnation promised by the arts involved a corresponding sensuousness. Heaven was brought down to earth, but at the cost of making men believe that earth itself was heavenly.

At this point the subject of our inquiry naturally divides into two main questions. The first concerns the form of figurative art specially adapted to the requirements of religious thought in the fourteenth century. The second treats of the effect resulting both to art and religion from the expression of mystical and theological conceptions in plastic form.

When we consider the nature of the ideas assimilated in the Middle Ages by the human mind, it is clear that art, in order to set them forth, demanded a language the Greeks had never greatly needed, and had therefore never fully learned. To over-estimate the difference from an æsthetic point of view between the religious notions of the Greeks and those which Christianity had made essential, would be difficult. Faith, hope, and charity; humility, endurance, suffering; the Resurrection and the Judgment; the Fall and the Redemption; Heaven and Hell; the height and depth of man's mixed nature; the drama of human destiny before the throne of God: into the sphere of thoughts like these, vivid and solemn, transcending the region of sense and corporeity, carrying the mind away to an ideal world, where the things of this earth obtained a new reality by virtue of their relation to an invisible and infinite Beyond, the modern arts in their infancy were thrust. There was nothing finite here or tangible, no gladness in the beauty of girlish foreheads or the swiftness of a young man's limbs, no simple idealisation of natural delightfulness. The human body, which the figurative arts must needs use as the vehicle of their expression, had ceased to have a value in and for itself, had ceased to be the true and adequate investiture of thoughts demanded from the artist. At best it could be taken only as the symbol of some inner meaning, the shrine of an indwelling spirit nobler than itself; just as a lamp of alabaster owes its beauty and its worth to the flame it more than half conceals, the light transmitted through its scarce transparent walls.

In ancient art those moral and spiritual qualities which the Greeks recognised as truly human and therefore divine, allowed themselves to be incarnated in well-selected types of physical perfection. The deities of the Greek mythology were limited to the conditions of natural existence: they were men and women of a larger mould and freer personality; less complex, inasmuch as each completed some one attribute; less thwarted in activity, inasmuch as no limit was assigned to exercise of power. The passions and the faculties of man, analysed by unconscious psychology, and deified by religious fancy, were invested by sculpture with appropriate forms, the tact of the artist selecting corporeal qualities fitted to impersonate the special character of

each divinity. Nor was it possible that, the gods and goddesses being what they were, exact analogues should not be found for them in idealised humanity. In a Greek statue there was enough soul to characterise the beauty of the body, to render her due meed of wisdom to Pallas, to distinguish the swiftness of Hermes from the strength of Heracles, or to contrast the virginal grace of Artemis with the abundance of Aphrodite's charms. At the same time the spirituality that gave its character to each Greek deity, was not such that, even in thought, it could be dissociated from corporeal form. The Greeks thought their gods as incarnate persons; and all the artist had to see to, was that this incarnate personality should be impressive in his marble.

Christianity, on the other hand, made the moral and spiritual nature of man all-essential. It sprang from an earlier religion, that judged it impious to give any form to God. The body and its terrestrial activity occupied but a subordinate position in its system. It was the life of the soul, separable from this frame of flesh, and destined to endure when earth and all that it contains had ended—a life that upon this planet was continued conflict and aspiring struggle—which the arts, insofar as they became its instrument, were called upon to illustrate. It was the worship of a Deity, all spirit, to be sought on no one sacred hill, to be adored in no transcendent shape, that they were bound to heighten. The most highly prized among the Christian virtues had no necessary connection with beauty of feature or strength of limb. Such beauty and such strength at any rate were accidental, not essential. A Greek faun could not but be graceful; a Greek hero was of necessity vigorous. But S. Stephen might be steadfast to the death without physical charm; S. Anthony might put to flight the devils of the flesh without muscular force. It is clear that the radiant physical perfection proper to the deities of Greek sculpture was not sufficient in this sphere.

Again, the most stirring episodes of the Christian mythology involved pain and perturbation of the spirit; the victories of the Christian athletes were won in conflicts carried on within their hearts and souls—'For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers,' demoniac leaders of spiritual legions. It is, therefore, no less clear that the tranquillity and serenity of the Hellenic ideal, so necessary to consummate sculpture, was here out of place. How could the Last Judgment, that day of wrath, when every soul, however insignificant on earth, will play the first part for one moment in an awful tragedy, be properly expressed in plastic form, harmonious and pleasing? And supposing that the artist should abandon the attempt to exclude ugliness and discord, pain and confusion, from his representation of the *Dies Irae*, how could he succeed in setting forth by the sole medium of the human body the anxiety and anguish of the soul at such a time? The physical form, instead of being adequate to the ideas expressed, and therefore helpful to the artist, is a positive embarrassment, a source of weakness. The most powerful pictorial or sculpturesque delineation

of the Judgment, when compared with the pangs inflicted on the spirit by a guilty conscience, pangs whereof words may render some account, but which can find no analogue in writhings of the limbs or face, must of necessity be found a failure. Still more impossible, if we pursue this train of thought into another region, is it for the figurative arts to approach the Christian conception of God in His omnipotence and unity. Christ Himself, the central figure of the Christian universe, the desired of all nations, in whom the Deity assumed a human form and dwelt with men, is no fit subject for such art at any rate as the Greeks had perfected. The fact of His incarnation brought Him indeed within the proper sphere of the fine arts; but the religious idea which He represents removed Him beyond the reach of sculpture. This is an all-important consideration. It is to this that our whole argument is tending. Therefore to enlarge upon this point will not be useless.

Christ is specially adored in His last act of love on Calvary; and how impossible it is to set that forth consistently with the requirements of strictly plastic art, may be gathered by comparing the passion of S. Bernard's Hymn to our Lord upon the Cross with all that Winckelmann and Hegel have so truly said about the restrained expression, dignified generality, and harmonious beauty essential to sculpture. It is the negation of tranquillity, the excess of feeling, the absence of comeliness, the contrast between visible weakness and invisible omnipotence, the physical humiliation voluntarily suffered by Him that 'ruled over all the angels, that walked on the pavements of heaven, whose feet were clothed with stars'—it is all this that gives their force and pathos to these stanzas:

Omnis vigor atque viror  
Hinc recessit; non admiror:  
Mors apparet in inspectu,  
Totus pendens in defectu,  
          Attritus ægrâ macie.

Sic affectus, sic despectus,  
Propter me sic interfectus,  
Peccatori tam indigno  
Cum amoris in te signo  
          Appare clarâ facie.<sup>2</sup>

We have never heard that Pheidias or Praxiteles chose Prometheus upon Caucasus for the supreme display of his artistic skill; and even

<sup>2</sup> All Thy strength and bloom are faded:  
Who hath thus Thy state degraded?  
Death upon Thy form is written;  
    See the wan worn limbs, the smitten  
    Breast upon the cruel tree!

Thus despised and desecrated,  
Thus in dying desolated,  
Slain for me, of sinners vilest,  
Loving Lord, on me Thou smilest:  
    Shine, bright face, and strengthen me!



the anguish expressed in the group of the Laocoon is justly thought to violate the laws of antique sculpture. Yet here was a greater than Prometheus—one who had suffered more, and on whose suffering the salvation of the human race depended, to exclude whom from the sphere of representation in art was the same as confessing the utter impotence of art to grasp the vital thought of modern faith. It is clear that the muses of the new age had to haunt Calvary instead of Helicon, slaking their thirst at no Castalian spring, but at the fount of tears outpoured by all creation for a stricken God. What Hellas had achieved supplied no norm or method for the arts in this new service.

From what has hitherto been advanced, we may assert with confidence that, if the arts were to play an important part in Christian culture, an art was imperatively demanded that should be at home in the sphere of intense feeling, that should treat the body as the interpreter and symbol of the soul, and should not shrink from pain and passion. How far the fine arts were at all qualified to express the essential thoughts of Christianity—a doubt suggested in the foregoing paragraphs—and how far, through their proved inadequacy to perform this task completely, they weakened the hold of mediæval faiths upon the modern mind, are questions to be raised hereafter. For the present it is enough to affirm that, least of all the arts, could sculpture, with its essential repose and its dependence on corporeal conditions, solve the problem. Sculpture had suited the requirements of Greek thought. It belonged by right to men who not unwillingly accepted the life of this world as final, and who worshipped in their deities the incarnate personality of man made perfect. But it could not express the cycle of Christian ideas. The desire of a better world, the fear of a worse; the sense of sin referred to physical appetites, and the corresponding mortification of the flesh; hope, ecstasy, and penitence and prayer; all these imply contempt or hatred for the body, suggest notions too spiritual to be conveyed by the rounded contours of beautiful limbs, too full of struggle for statuesque tranquillity. The new element needed a more elastic medium of expression. Motives more varied, gradations of sentiment more delicate, the fugitive and transient phases of emotion, the inner depths of consciousness, had somehow to be seized. It was here that painting asserted its supremacy. Painting is many degrees further removed than sculpture from dependence on the body in the fullness of its physical proportions. It touches our sensibility by suggestions more indirect, more mobile, and more multifarious. Colour and shadow, aerial perspective and complicated grouping, denied to sculpture, but within the proper realm of painting, have their own significance, their real relation to feelings vaguer, but not less potent, than those which find expression in the simple human form. To painting, again, belongs the play of feature, indicative of internal movement, through a whole gamut of modulations inapprehensible by sculpture. All that drapery by its partial concealment of the form it clothes, and landscape by its sympathies with human sentiment, may supply to en-

hance the passion of the spectator, pertains to painting. This art, therefore, owing to the greater variety of means at its disposal, and its greater adequacy to express emotion, became the paramount Italian art.

To sculpture in the Renaissance, shorn of the divine right to create gods and heroes, was left the narrower field of decoration, portraiture, and sepulchral monuments. In the last of these departments it found the noblest scope for its activity; for beyond the grave, according to Christian belief, the account of the striving, hoping, and resisting soul is settled. The corpse upon the bier may bear the stamp of spiritual character impressed on it in life; but the spirit, with its struggle and its passion, has escaped as from a prison-house, and flown else-whither. The body of the dead man, for whom this world is over, and who sleeps in peace, awaiting resurrection, and thereby not wholly dead, around whose tomb watch sympathising angels or contemplative genii, was, therefore, the proper subject for the highest Christian sculpture. Here, if anywhere, the right emotion could be adequately expressed in stone, and the moulded form be made the symbol of repose, expectant of restored activity. The greatest sculptor of the modern age was essentially a poet of Death.

Painting, then, for the reasons already assigned and insisted on, was the art demanded by the modern intellect upon its emergence from the stillness of the Middle Ages. The problem, however, even for the art of painting was not simple. The painters, following the masters of mosaic, began by setting forth the history, mythology, and legends of the Christian Church in imagery freer and more beautiful than lay within the scope of treatment by Romanesque or Byzantine art. So far their task was comparatively easy; for the idyllic grace of maternal love in the Madonna, the pathetic incidents of martyrdom, the courage of confessors, the ecstasies of celestial joy in redeemed souls, the loveliness of a pure life in modest virgins, and the dramatic episodes of sacred story, furnish a multitude of motives admirably pictorial. There was, therefore, no great obstacle upon the threshold, so long as artists gave their willing service to the Church. Yet, looking back upon this phase of painting, we are able to perceive that already the adaptation of art to Christian dogma entailed concessions on both sides. Much, on one hand, had to be omitted from the programme offered to artistic treatment, for the reason that the fine arts could not deal with it at all. Much, on the other hand, had to be expressed by means which painting in a state of perfect freedom would repudiate. Allegorical symbols, like Prudence with two faces, and painful episodes of agony and anguish, marred her work of beauty. There was consequently a double compromise, involving a double sacrifice of something precious. The faith suffered by having its mysteries brought into the light of day, incarnated in form, and humanised. Art suffered by being forced to render intellectual abstractions to the eye through figured symbols.

As technical skill increased, and as beauty, the proper end of art, became more rightly understood, the painters found that their craft

was worthy of being made an end in itself, and that the actualities of life observed around them had claims upon their genius no less weighty than dogmatic mysteries. The subjects they had striven at first to realise with all simplicity now became little better than vehicles for the display of sensuous beauty, science, and mundane pageantry. The human body received separate and independent study, as a thing in itself incomparably beautiful, commanding more powerful emotions by its magic than aught else that sways the soul. At the same time the external world, with all its wealth of animal and vegetable life, together with the works of human ingenuity in costly clothing and superb buildings, was seen to be in every detail worthy of most patient imitation. Anatomy and perspective taxed the understanding of the artist, whose whole force was no longer devoted to the task of bringing religious ideas within the limits of the representable. Next, when the classical revival came into play, the arts, in obedience to the spirit of the age, left the sphere of sacred subjects, and employed their full-grown faculties in the domain of myths and Pagan fancies. In this way painting may truly be said to have opened the new era of culture, and to have first manifested the freedom of the modern mind.

When Luca Signorelli drew naked young men for a background to his picture of Madonna and the infant Christ, he created for the student a symbol of the attitude assumed by fine art in its liberty of outlook over the whole range of human interests. Standing before this picture in the Uffizzi, we feel that the Church, while hoping to adorn her cherished dogmas with æsthetic beauty, had encouraged a power antagonistic to her own, a power that liberated the spirit she sought to enthrall, restoring to mankind the earthly paradise from which monasticism had expelled it.

Not to diverge at this point, and to entertain the difficult problem of the relation of the fine arts to Christianity, would be to shrink from the most thorny question offered to the understanding by the history of the Renaissance. On the very threshold of the matter I am bound to affirm my conviction that the spiritual purists of all ages—the Jews, the iconoclasts of Byzantium, Savonarola, and our Puritan ancestors—were justified in their mistrust of plastic art. The spirit of Christianity and the spirit of figurative art are opposed, not because such art is immoral, but because it cannot free itself from sensuous associations.<sup>3</sup> It is always bringing us back to the dear life of earth, from which the faith would sever us. It is always reminding us of the body which piety bids us to forget. Painters and sculptors glorify that which saints

<sup>3</sup> I am aware that many of my readers will demur that I am confounding Christianity with ascetic or monastic Christianity; yet I cannot read the New Testament, the *Imitatio Christi*, the *Confessions* of S. Augustine, and the *Pilgrim's Progress* without feeling that Christianity in its origin, and as understood by its chief champions, was and is ascetic. Of this Christianity I therefore speak, not of the philosophised Christianity, which is reasonably regarded with suspicion by the orthodox and the uncompromising. It was, moreover, with Christianity of this primitive type that the arts came first into collision.

and ascetics have mortified. The masterpieces of Titian and Correggio, for example, lead the soul away from compunction, away from penitence, away from worship even, to dwell on the delight of youthful faces, blooming colour, graceful movement, delicate emotion.<sup>4</sup> Nor is this all: religious motives may be misused for what is worse than merely sensuous suggestiveness. The masterpieces of the Bolognese and Neapolitan painters, while they pretend to quicken compassion for martyrs in their agony, pander to a bestial blood-lust lurking in the darkest chambers of the soul.<sup>5</sup> Therefore it is that piety, whether the piety of monastic Italy or of Puritan England, turns from these æsthetic triumphs as from something alien to itself. When the worshipper would fain ascend on wings of ecstasy to God, the infinite, ineffable, unrealised, how can he endure the contact of those splendid forms, in which the lust of the eye and the pride of life, professing to subserve devotion, remind him rudely of the goodness of sensual existence? Art, by magnifying human beauty, contradicts these Pauline maxims: 'For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain;' 'Set your affections on things above, not on things on earth;' 'Your life is hid with Christ in God.' The sublimity and elevation it gives to carnal loveliness are themselves hostile to the spirit that holds no truce or compromise of traffic with the flesh. As displayed in its most perfect phases, in Greek sculpture and Venetian painting, art dignifies the actual mundane life of man; but Christ, in the language of uncompromising piety, means everything most alien to this mundane life—self-denial, abstinence from fleshly pleasure, the waiting for true bliss beyond the grave, seclusion even from social and domestic ties. 'He that loveth father and mother more than me, is not worthy of me.' 'He that taketh not his cross and followeth me, is not worthy of me.' It is needful to insist upon these extremest sentences of the New Testament, because upon them was based the religious practice of the Middle Ages, more sincere in their determination to fulfil the letter and embrace the spirit of the Gospel than any succeeding age has been.<sup>6</sup>

If, then, there really exists this antagonism between fine art glorifying human life and piety condemning it, how came it, we may ask, that even in the Middle Ages the Church hailed art as her coadjutor? The answer lies in this, that the Church has always compromised. The movement of the modern world, upon the close of the Middle Ages, offered the Church a compromise, which it would have been difficult to refuse, and in which she perceived at first no peril to her dogmas. When the conflict of the first few centuries of Christianity had ended in her triumph, she began to mediate between asceticism and the world. Intent on absorbing all existent elements of life and power, she con-

<sup>4</sup> Titian's 'Assumption of the Virgin' at Venice, Correggio's 'Coronation of the Virgin' at Parma.

<sup>5</sup> Domenichino, Guido, Ribera, Salvator Rosa.

<sup>6</sup> Not to quote again the *Imitatio Christi*, it is enough to allude to S. Francis as shown in the *Fioretti*.

formed her system to the Roman type, established her service in basilicas and Pagan temples, adopted portions of the antique ritual, and converted local genii into saints. At the same time she utilised the spiritual forces of monasticism and turned the mystic impulse of ecstasies to account. The Orders of the Preachers and the Begging Friars became her militia and police; the mystery of Christ's presence in the Eucharist was made an engine of the priesthood; the dreams of Paradise and Purgatory gave value to her pardons, interdictions, jubilees, indulgences, and curses. In the Church the spirit of the cloister and the spirit of the world found neutral ground, and to the practical accommodation between these hostile elements she owed her wide supremacy. The Christianity she formed and propagated was different from that of the New Testament, inasmuch as it had taken up into itself a mass of mythological anthropomorphic elements. Thus transmuted and materialised, thus accepted by the vivid faith of an unquestioning populace, Christianity offered a proper medium for artistic activity. The whole first period of Italian painting was occupied with the endeavour to set forth in form and colour the popular conceptions of a faith at once unphilosophical and unspiritual, beautiful and fit for art by reason of the human elements it had assumed into its substance. It was natural, therefore, that the Church should show herself indulgent to the arts, which were effecting in their own sphere what she had previously accomplished, though purists and ascetics, holding fast by the original spirit of their creed, might remain irreconcilably antagonistic to their influence. The Reformation, on the contrary, rejecting the whole mass of compromises sanctioned by the Church, and returning to the elemental principles of the faith, was no less naturally opposed to fine arts, which, after giving sensuous form to Catholic mythology, had recently attained to liberty and brought again the gods of Greece.

A single illustration might be selected from the annals of Italian painting to prove how difficult even the holiest-minded and most earnest painter found it to effect the proper junction between plastic beauty and pious feeling. Fra Bartolommeo, the disciple of Savonarola, painted a Sebastian in the cloister of S. Marco, where it remained until the Dominican confessors became aware, through the avowals of female penitents, that this picture was a stumbling-block and snare to souls. It was then removed, and what became of it we do not know for certain. Fra Bartolommeo undoubtedly intended this ideal portrait of the martyr to be edifying. S. Sebastian was to stand before the world as the young man, strong and beautiful, who endured to the end and won the crown of martyrdom. No other ideas but those of heroism, constancy, or faith were meant to be expressed; but the painter's art demanded that their expression should be eminently beautiful, and the beautiful body of the young man distracted attention from his spiritual virtues to his physical perfections. A similar maladjustment of the means of plastic art to the purposes of religion would have been impossible in Hellas, where the temples of Erôs and of Phœbus stood side by side; but in

Christian Florence the craftsman's skill sowed seeds of discord in the souls of the devout.<sup>7</sup>

This story is but a coarse instance of the separation between piety and plastic art. In truth, the difficulty of uniting them in such a way that the latter shall enforce the former, lies far deeper than its powers of illustration reach. Religion has its proper end in contemplation and in conduct. Art aims at presenting sensuous embodiment of thoughts and feelings with a view to intellectual enjoyment. Now, many thoughts are incapable of sensuous embodiment; they appear as abstractions to the philosophical intellect or as dogmas to the theological understanding. To effect an alliance between art and philosophy or art and theology in the specific region of either religion or speculation is, therefore, an impossibility. In like manner there are many feelings which cannot properly assume a sensuous form; and these are precisely religious feelings, in which the soul abandons sense, and leaves the actual world behind, to seek her freedom in a spiritual region.<sup>8</sup> Yet, while we recognise the truth of this reasoning, it would be unscientific to maintain that, until they are brought into close and inconvenient contact, there is direct hostility between religion and the arts. The sphere of the two is separate; their aims are distinct; they must be allowed to perfect themselves, each after its own fashion. In the large philosophy of human nature, represented by Goethe's famous motto, there is room for both, because those who embrace it bend their natures neither wholly to the pietism of the cloister nor to the sensuality of art. They find the meeting-point of art and of religion in their own humanity, and perceive that the antagonism of the two begins when art is set to do work alien to its nature, and to minister to what it does not naturally serve.

At the risk of repetition I must now resume the points I have attempted to establish in this chapter. As in ancient Greece, so also in Renaissance Italy, the fine arts assumed the first place in the intellectual culture of the nation. But the thought and feeling of the modern world required an æsthetic medium more capable of expressing emotion in its intensity, variety, and subtlety than sculpture. Therefore painting was the art of arts for Italy. Yet even painting, notwithstanding the range and wealth of its resources, could not deal with the motives of Christianity so successfully as sculpture with the myths of Paganism. The religion it interpreted transcended the actual conditions of humanity, while art is bound down by its nature to the limitations of the world

<sup>7</sup> The difficulty of combining the true spirit of piety with the ideal of natural beauty in art was strongly felt by Savonarola. Rio (*L'Art chrétien*, vol. ii. pp. 422-426) has written eloquently on this subject, but without making it plain how Savonarola's condemnation of life studies from the nude could possibly have been other than an obstacle to the liberal and scientific prosecution of the art of painting.

<sup>8</sup> See Rio, *L'Art chrétien*, vol. ii. chap. xi. pp. 319-327, for an ingenious defence of mystic art. The tales he tells of Bernardino da Siena and the blessed Umiliana will not win the sympathy of Teutonic Christians, who must believe that semi-sensuous, semi-pious raptures, like those described by S. Catherine of Siena and S. Theresa, have something in them psychologically morbid.

we live in. The Church imagined art would help her; and within a certain sphere of subjects, by vividly depicting Scripture histories and the lives of saints, by creating new types of serene beauty and pure joy, by giving form to angelic beings, by interpreting Mariolatry in all its charm and pathos, and by rousing deep sympathy with our Lord in His Passion, painting lent efficient aid to piety. Yet painting had to omit the very pith and kernel of Christianity as conceived by devout, uncompromising purists. Nor did it do what the Church would have desired. Instead of riveting the fetters of ecclesiastical authority, instead of enforcing mysticism and asceticism, it really restored to humanity the sense of its own dignity and beauty, and helped to prove the untenability of the mediæval standpoint; for art is essentially and uncontrollably free, and, what is more, is free precisely in that realm of sensuous delightfulness from which cloistral religion turns aside to seek her own ecstatic liberty of contemplation.

The first step in the emancipation of the modern mind was taken thus by art, proclaiming to men the glad tidings of their goodliness and greatness in a world of manifold enjoyment created for their use. Whatever painting touched, became by that touch human; piety, at the lure of art, folded her soaring wings and rested on the genial earth. This the Church had not foreseen. Because the freedom of the human spirit expressed itself in painting only under visible images, and not, like heresy, in abstract sentences; because this art sufficed for Mariolatry and confirmed the cult of local saints; because its sensuousness was not at variance with a creed that had been deeply sensualised—the painters were allowed to run their course unchecked. Then came a second stage in their development of art. By placing the end of their endeavour in technical excellence and anatomical accuracy, they began to make representation an object in itself, independently of its spiritual significance. Next, under the influence of the classical revival, they brought home again the old powers of the earth—Aphrodite and Galatea and the Loves, Adonis and Narcissus and the Graces, Phœbus and Daphne and Aurora, Pan and the Fauns, and the Nymphs of the woods and the waves.

When these dead deities rose from their sepulchres to sway the hearts of men in the new age, it was found that something had been taken from their ancient bloom of innocence, something had been added of emotional intensity. Italian art recognised their claim to stand beside Madonna and the Saints in the Pantheon of humane culture; but the painters re-made them in accordance with the modern spirit. This slight touch of transformation proved that, though they were no longer objects of religious devotion, they still preserved a vital meaning for an altered age. Having personified for the antique world qualities which, though suppressed and ignored by militant and mediæval Christianity, were strictly human, the Hellenic deities still signified those qualities for modern Europe, now at length re-fortified by contact with the ancient mind. For it is needful to remember that in all movements of the Renaissance we ever find a return in all sincerity and faith to the glory



and gladness of nature, whether in the world without or in the soul of man. To apprehend that glory and that gladness with the pure and primitive perceptions of the early mythopoeists, was not given to the men of the new world. Yet they did what in them lay, with senses sophisticated by many centuries of subtlest warping, to replace the first free joy of kinship with primeval things. For the painters, far more than for the poets of the sixteenth century, it was possible to reproduce a thousand forms of beauty, each attesting to the delightfulness of physical existence, to the inalienable rights of natural desire, and to the participation of mankind in pleasures held in common by us with the powers of earth and sea and air.

It is wonderful to watch the blending of elder and of younger forces in this process. The old gods lent a portion of their charm even to Christian mythology, and showered their beauty-bloom on saints who died renouncing them. Sodoma's Sebastian is but Hyacinth or Hylas, transpierced with arrows, so that pain and martyrdom add pathos to his poetry of youthfulness. Lionardo's S. John is a Faun of the forest, ivy-crowned and laughing, on whose lips the word 'Repent' would be a gleeful paradox. For the painters of the full Renaissance, Roman martyrs and Olympian deities—the heroes of the *Acta Sanctorum*, and the heroes of Greek romance—were alike burghers of one spiritual city, the city of the beautiful and human. What exquisite and evanescent fragrance was educed from these apparently diverse blossoms by their interminglement and fusion—how the high-wrought sensibilities of the Christian were added to the clear and radiant fancies of the Greek, and how the frank sensuousness of the Pagan gave body and fulness to the floating wraiths of an ascetic faith—remains a miracle for those who, like our master Lionardo, love to scrutinise the secrets of twin natures and of double graces. There are not a few for whom the mystery is repellent, who shrink from it as from Hermaphroditus. These will always find something to pain them in the art of the Renaissance.

Having co-ordinated the Christian and Pagan traditions in its work of beauty, painting could advance no farther. The stock of its sustaining motives was exhausted. A problem that preoccupied the minds of thinking men at this epoch was how to harmonise the two chief moments of human culture, the classical and the ecclesiastical. Without being as conscious of their hostility as we are, men felt that the Pagan ideal was opposed to the Christian, and at the same time that a reconciliation had to be effected. Each had been worked out separately; but both were needed for the modern synthesis. All that æsthetic handling, in this region more precocious and more immediately fruitful than pure thought, could do towards mingling them, was done by the impartiality of the fine arts. Painting, in the work of Raphael, accomplished a more vital harmony than philosophy in the writings of Pico and Ficino. A new Catholicity, a cosmopolitan orthodoxy of the beautiful, was manifested in his pictures. It lay outside his power, or that of any other artist, to do more than to extract from both revelations the elements of

plastic beauty they contained, and to show how freely he could use them for a common purpose. Nothing but the scientific method can in the long run enable us to reach that further point, outside both Christianity and Paganism, at which the classical ideal of a temperate and joyous natural life shall be restored to the conscience educated by the Gospel. This, perchance, is the religion, still unborn or undeveloped, whereof Joachim of Flora dimly prophesied when he said that the kingdom of the Father was past, the kingdom of the Son was passing, and the kingdom of the Spirit was to be. The essence of it is contained in the whole growth to usward of the human mind; and though a creed so highly intellectualised as that will be, can never receive adequate expression from the figurative arts, still the painting of the sixteenth century forms for it, as it were, a not unworthy vestibule. It does so, because it first succeeded in humanising the religion of the Middle Ages, in proclaiming the true value of antique paganism for the modern mind, and in making both subserve the purposes of free and unimpeded art.

Meanwhile, at the moment when painting was about to be exhausted, a new art had arisen, for which it remained, within the æsthetic sphere, to achieve much that painting could not do. When the cycle of Christian ideas had been accomplished by the painters, and when the first passion for antiquity had been satisfied, it was given at last to Music to express the soul in all its manifold feeling and complexity of movement. In music we see the point of departure where art leaves the domain of myths, Christian as well as Pagan, and occupies itself with the emotional activity of man alone, and for its own sake. Melody and harmony, disconnected from words, are capable of receiving most varied interpretations, so that the same combinations of sound express the ecstasies of earthly and of heavenly love, conveying to the mind of the hearer only that element of pure passion which is the primitive and natural ground-material of either. They give distinct form to moods of feeling as yet undetermined; or, as the Italians put it, *la musica è il lamento dell' amore o la preghiera a gli dei*. This, combined with its independence of all corporeal conditions, renders music the true exponent of the spirit in its freedom, and therefore the essentially modern art.

For Painting, after the great work accomplished during the Renaissance, when the painters ran through the whole domain of thought within the scope of that age, there only remained portraiture, history, dramatic incident, landscape, *genre*, still life, and animals. In these spheres the art is still exercised, and much good work, undoubtedly, is annually produced by European painters. But painting has lost its hold upon the centre of our intellectual activity. It can no longer give form to the ideas that at the present epoch rule the modern world. These ideas are too abstract, too much a matter of the understanding, to be successfully handled by the figurative arts; and it cannot be too often or too emphatically stated that these arts produce nothing really great

and universal in relation to the spirit of their century, except by a process analogous to the mythopoetic. With conceptions incapable of being sensuously apprehended, with ideas that lose their value when they are incarnated, they have no power to deal. As meteors become luminous by traversing the grosser element of our terrestrial atmosphere, so the thoughts that art employs must needs immerse themselves in sensuousness. They must be of a nature to gain rather than to suffer by such immersion; and they must make a direct appeal to minds habitually apt to think in metaphors and myths. Of this sort are all religious ideas at a certain stage of their development, and this attitude at certain moments of history is adopted by the popular consciousness. We have so far outgrown it, have so completely exchanged mythology for curiosity, and metaphor for science, that the necessary conditions for great art are wanting. Our deepest thoughts about the world and God are incapable of personification by any æsthetic process; they never enter that atmosphere wherein alone they could become through fine art luminous. For the painter, who is the form-giver, they have ceased to be shining stars, and are seen as opaque stones; and though divinity be in them, it is a deity that refuses the investiture of form.

## CHAPTER II

### ARCHITECTURE

*Architecture of Mediæval Italy—Milan, Genoa, Venice—The Despots as Builders—Diversity of Styles—Local influences—Lombard, Tuscan, Romanesque, Gothic—Italian want of feeling for Gothic—Cathedrals of Siena and Orvieto—Secular Buildings of the Middle Ages—Florence and Venice—Private Palaces—Public Halls—Palazzo della Signoria at Florence—Arnolfo del Cambio—S. Maria del Fiore—Brunelleschi's Dome—Classical revival in Architecture—Roman ruins—Three Periods in Renaissance Architecture—Their characteristics—Brunelleschi—Alberti—Palace-building—Michelozzo—Decorative work of the Revival—Bramante—Vitoni's Church of the Umiltà at Pistoja—Palazzo del Te—Villa Farnesina—Sansovino at Venice—Michael Angelo—The building of S. Peter's—Palladio—The Palazzo della Ragione at Vicenza—Lombard Architects—Theorists and students of Vitruvius—Vignola and Scamozzi—European influence of the Palladian style—Comparison of Scholars and Architects in relation to the Revival of Learning.*

ARCHITECTURE is always the first of the fine arts to emerge from barbarism in the service of religion and of civic life. A house, as Hegel says, must be built for the god before the image of the god, carved in stone or figured in mosaic, can be placed there. Council chambers must be prepared for the senate of a State before the national achievements can be painted on the walls. Thus Italy, before the age of the Renaissance proper, found herself provided with churches and palaces, which were destined in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to be adorned with frescoes and statues.

It was in the middle of the thirteenth century, during the long struggle for independence carried on by the republics of Lombardy and Tuscany against the Empire and the nobles, that some of the most durable and splendid public works were executed. The domes and towers of Florence and of Pisa were rising above the city walls, while the burghers who subscribed for their erection were staining the waves of Meloria and the cane-brakes of the Arbia with their blood. Lombardy, at the end of her duel with Frederick Barbarossa, completed a vast undertaking, by which the fields of Milan are still rendered more productive than any other pasture-land in Europe. The Naviglio Grande, bringing the waters of the Ticino through a plain of thirty miles to Milan, was begun in 1179, and was finished in 1258. The torrents of S. Gothard and the Simplon, which, after filling the Lago Maggiore, seemed destined to run wasteful through a wilderness of pebbles to the sea, were thus turned to account; and to this great engineering work, as bold as it was simple, Milan owed the wealth that placed her

princes on a level with the sovereigns of Europe. At the same period she built her walls, and closed their circuit with the sixteen gates that showed she loved magnificence combined with strength. Genoa, between 1276 and 1283, protected her harbours by a gigantic mole, and in 1295 brought the streams of the Ligurian Alps into the city by an aqueduct worthy of old Rome. Venice had to win her very footing from the sea and sand. So firmly did she drive her piles, so vigilantly watch their preservation, that palaces and cathedrals of marble might be safely reared upon the bosom of the deep. Meanwhile, stone bridges began to span the rivers of Italy; the streets and squares of towns were everywhere paved with flags. Before the first years of the fourteenth century the Italian cities presented a spectacle of solid and substantial comfort, very startling to northerners who travelled from the unpaved lanes of London and the muddy labyrinths of Paris.

Sismondi remarks with just pride that these great works were Republican. They were set on foot for the public use, and were constructed at the expense of the commonwealths. It is, however, right to add that what the communes had begun the princes continued. To the splendid taste of the Visconti dynasty, for instance, Milan owed her wonderful *Duomo* and the octagon bell-tower of S. Gottardo. The Certosas of Pavia and Chiaravalle, the palace of Pavia, and a host of minor monuments remain in Milan and its neighbourhood to prove how much a single family performed for the adornment of the cities they had subjugated. And what is true of Milan applies to Italy throughout its length and breadth. The Despots held their power at the price of magnificence in schemes of public utility. So much at least of the free spirit of the communes survived in them, that they were always rivalling each other in great works of architecture. Italian tyranny implied æsthetic taste and liberality of expenditure.

In no way is the characteristic diversity of the Italian communities so noticeable as in their buildings. Each district, each town, has a well-defined peculiarity, reflecting the specific qualities of the inhabitants and the conditions under which they grew in culture. In some cases we may refer this local character to nationality and geographical position. Thus the name of the Lombards has been given to a style of Romanesque, which prevailed through Northern and Central Italy during the period of Lombard ascendancy.<sup>1</sup> The Tuscans never forgot the domes of their remote ancestors; the Romans adhered closely to Latin

<sup>1</sup> The question of the genesis of the Lombard style is one of the most difficult in Italian art-history. I would not willingly be understood to speak of Lombard architecture in any sense different from that in which it is usual to speak of Norman. To suppose that either the Lombards or the Normans had a style of their own, prior to their occupations of districts from the monuments of which they learned rudely to use the decayed Roman manner, would be incorrect. Yet it seems impossible to deny that both Normans and Lombards in adapting antecedent models added something of their own, specific to themselves as Northerners. The Lombard, like the Norman or the Rhenish Romanesque, is the first stage in the progressive mediæval architecture of its own district.

traditions; the Southerners were affected by Byzantine and Saracenic models. In many instances the geology of the neighbourhood determined the picturesque features of its architecture. The clay-fields of the valley of the Po produced the brickwork of Cremona, Pavia, Crema, Chiaravalle, and Vercelli. To their quarries of *mandorlato* the Veronese builders owed the peach-bloom colours of their columned aisles. Carrara provided the Pisans with mellow marble for their Baptistery and Cathedral; Monte Ferrato supplied Pistoja and Prato with green serpentine; while the *pietra serena* of the Apennines added austerity to the interior of Florentine buildings. Again, in other instances, we detect the influence of commerce or of conquest. The intercourse of Venice with Alexandria determined the unique architecture of S. Mark's. The Arabs and the Normans left inefaceable traces of their sojourn on Palermo. Naples and Messina still bear marks upon their churches of French workmen. All along the coasts we here and there find evidences of Oriental style imported into mediæval Italy, while the impress of the Spaniard is no less manifest in edifices of a later period.

Existing thus in the midst of many potent influences, and surrounded by the ruins of past civilisations, the Italians recombined and mingled styles of marked variety. The Roman, Byzantine, Saracenic, Lombard, and German traditions were blended in their architecture, as the presiding genius of each place determined. It followed that master-works of rare and subtle invention were produced, while no one type was fully perfected, nor can we point to any paramount Italian manner. In Italy what was gained in richness and individuality was lost in uniformity and might. Yet we may well wonder at the versatile appreciation of all types of beauty that these monuments evince. How strange, for example, it is to think of the Venetians borrowing the form and structure of their temple from the mosques of Alexandria, decking its façade with the horses of Lysippus, and panelling the sanctuary with marbles from the harem-floors of Eastern emperors; while at the other end of Italy, at Palermo, close beside the ruined colonnades of Greek Segesta, Norman kings were embroidering their massive churches with Saracenic arabesques and Byzantine mosaics, interspersing delicate Arabian tracery with rope-patterns and monsters of the deep, and linking Cuphic sentences with Scandinavian runes. Meanwhile, at Rome, tombs, baths, and theatres had been turned into fortresses. The Orsini held the Mole of Hadrian; the Savelli ensconced themselves in the Theatre of Marcellus, and the Colonnese in the Mausoleum of Augustus; the Colosseum and the Arches of Constantine and Titus harboured the Frangipani; the Baths of Trajan housed the Capocci; while the Gaetani made a castle of Cæcilia Metalla's tomb. Under those vast resounding vaults swarmed a brood of mediæval *bravi*—like the wasps that hang their pear-shaped combs along the cloisters of Pavia. There the ghost of the dead empire still sat throned and sceptred. The rites of Christianity were carried on beneath Agrippa's dome, in Diocletian's baths, in the Basilicas. No other style but that of the imperial people struck root near the Eternal

City. Among her three hundred churches, Rome can only show one Gothic building. Further to the north, where German influences were more potent, the cathedrals still displayed, each after its own kind, a sunny southern waywardness. Glowing with marbles and mosaics, glittering with ornaments, where the foliage of the Corinthian acanthus hides the symbols of the Passion, and where birds and Cupids peep from tangled fruits beneath grave brows of saints and martyrs; leaning now to the long low colonnades of the Basilica, now to the high-built arches of the purely Pointed style; surmounting the meeting point of nave and transept with Etruscan domes; covering the façade with bas-reliefs, the roof with statues; raising the porch-pillars upon lions and winged griffins; flanking the nave with bell-towers, or planting them apart like flowers in isolation on the open square—these wonderful buildings, the delight and joy of all who love to trace variety in beauty, and to note the impress of a nation's genius upon its art, seem, like Italy herself, to feel all influences and to assimilate all nationalities.

Amid the many styles of architecture contending for mastery in Italy, three, before the age of the Revival, bid fair to win the battle. These were the Lombard, the Tuscan Romanesque, and the Gothic. Chronologically the two former flourished nearly during the same centuries, while Gothic, coming from without, suspended their development. But chronology is of little help in the history of Italian architecture; its main features being, not uniformity of progression, but synchronous diversity and salience of local type. What remained fixed through all changes in Italy was a bias toward the forms of Roman building, which eventually in the Renaissance, becoming scientifically apprehended, determined the taste of the whole nation.

It is, perhaps, not wholly fanciful to say that, as the Lombards just failed to mould the Italians by conquest into an united people, so their architecture fell short of creating one type for the peninsula.<sup>2</sup> From some points of view the historian might regret that Italy did not receive that thorough subjugation in the eighth century, which would have broken down local distinctions. Such regrets, however, are singularly idle; for the main currents of the world's history move not by chance; and how, moreover, could Italy have fulfilled her destiny without the divers forms of political existence that made her what she was? Yet, standing before some of the great Lombard churches, we are inclined to speculate, perhaps with better reason, what the result would have been if that style of architecture could have assumed the complete ascendancy over the Italians which the Romanesque and Gothic of the North exerted over France and England?<sup>3</sup> The pyramidal façade common in these build-

<sup>2</sup> I use the term Lombard architecture here, as defined above (p. 608, note), for the style of building prevalent in Italy during the Lombard occupation, or just after.

<sup>3</sup> The essential difference between Italy and either Northern France or England, was that in Italy there existed monuments of Roman greatness, which could never be forgotten by her architects. They always worked with at least half of their attention



ings, the campanili that suspend aerial lanterns upon plain square towers, the domes rising tier over tier from the intersection of nave and transept to end in minarets and pinnacles, the low long colonnades of marble pilasters, the open porches resting upon lions, the harmonious blending of baked clay and rosy-tinted stone, the bold combination of round and pointed arches, and the weird invention whereby every string-course and capital has been carved with lions, sphinxes, serpents, mermaids, griffins, harpies, winged horses, lizards, and knights in armour—all these are elements that might, we fancy, have been developed into a noble national style. As it is, the churches in question are often more bizarre than really beautiful. Their peculiar character, however, is inseparably associated with the long reaches of green plain, the lordly rivers, and the background of blue hills and snowy Alps that constitute the charm of Lombard landscape.

If Lombard architecture, properly so-called, was partial in its influence and confined to a comparatively narrow local sphere, the same is true of the Tuscan Romanesque. The church of Samminiato, near Florence [about 1013], and the cathedral of Pisa [begun 1063], not to mention other less eminent examples at Lucca and Pistoja, are sufficient evidences that in the darkest period of the Middle Ages the Italians were aiming at an architectural Renaissance. The influence of classical models is apparent both in the construction and the detail of these basilicas; while the deeply grounded preference of the Italian genius for round arches, for colonnades of pillars and pilasters, and for large rectangular spaces, with low roofs and shallow tribunes, finds full satisfaction in these original and noble buildings. It is impossible to refrain from deploring that the Romanesque of Tuscany should have been checked in its development by the intrusion of the German Gothic. Had it run its course unthwarted, a national style suited to the temperament of the people might have been formed, and much that was pedantic in the revival of the fifteenth century have been obviated.

The place of Gothic architecture in Italy demands fuller treatment. It was due partly to the direct influence of German emperors, partly to the imperial sympathies of the great nobles, partly to the Franciscan friars, who aimed at building large churches cheaply, and partly to the admiration excited by the grandeur of the Pointed style as it prevailed in Northern Europe, that Gothic—so alien to the Italian genius and climate—took root, spread widely, and flourished freely for a season. In thus enumerating the conditions favourable to the spread of Gottico-Tedesco, I am far from wishing to assert that this style was purely foreign. Italy, in common with the rest of Europe, passed by a natural process of evolution from the Romanesque to the Pointed manner, and treated the latter with an originality that proves a certain natural assimilation. Yet the first Gothic church, that of S. Francis at Assisi, was de-

turned to the past: nor had they the exhilarating sense of free, spontaneous, and progressive invention. This point has been well worked out by Mr. Street in the last chapter of his book on the *Architecture of North Italy*.

signed by a German; the most splendid, that of Our Lady at Milan, is emphatically German.<sup>4</sup> During the comparatively brief period of Gothic ascendancy the Italians never forgot their Latin and Lombard sympathies. The mood of mind in which they Gothicised was partial and transient. The evolution of this style was, therefore, neither so spontaneous and simple, nor yet so uninterrupted and complete, in Italy as in the North. While it produced the church of S. Francesco at Assisi and the cathedrals of Siena, Orvieto, Lucca, Bologna, Florence, and Milan, together with the town halls of Perugia, Siena, and Florence, it failed to take firm hold upon the national taste, and died away before the growing passion for antiquity that restored the Italians to a sense of their own intellectual greatness. It is clear that, as soon as they were conscious of their vocation to revive the culture of the classic age, they at once and for ever abandoned the style appropriate to northern feudalism. They seem to have adopted it half-unwillingly and to have understood it only in the imperfect way in which they comprehended chivalry.

The Italians never rightly apprehended the specific nature of Gothic architecture. They could not forget the horizontal lines, flat roofs, and blank walls of the Basilica. Like their Roman ancestors, they aimed at covering the ground with the smallest possible expenditure of construction; to enclose large spaces within simple limits was their first object, and the effect of beauty or sublimity was gained by the proportions given to the total area. When, therefore, they adopted the Gothic style, they failed to perceive that its true merit consists in the negation of nearly all that the Latin style holds precious. Horizontal lines are as far as possible annihilated; walls are lost in windows; aisles and columns, apses and chapels, are multiplied with a view to complexity of architectonic effect; flat roofs become intolerable. The whole force employed in the construction has an upward tendency, and the spire is the completion of the edifice; for to the spire its countless soaring lines—lines not of stationary strength, but of ascendent growth—converge. All this the Italians were slow to comprehend. The campanile, for example, never became an integral part of their buildings. It stood alone, and was reserved for its original purpose of keeping the bells. The windows, for a reason very natural in Italy, where there is rather too much than too little sunlight, were curtailed; and instead of the multiplied bays and clustered columns of a northern Gothic aisle, the nave of so vast a church as S. Petronio at Bologna is measured by six arches raised on simple piers. The façade of an Italian cathedral was studied as a screen, quite independently of its relation to the interior; in the beautiful church of Crema, for example, the moon at night looks through the upper windows of a frontispiece raised far above the low roof of the nave. For the total effect of the exterior, as will be apparent to anyone who

<sup>4</sup> Even though it be now proved that not Heinrich von Gmunden, but Marco Frisone da Campione, not a German, but a Milanese, was the first architect, this is none the less true about its style.

observes the Duomo of Orvieto from behind, no thought was taken. In this way the Italians missed the point and failed to perceive the poetry of Gothic architecture. Its symbolical significance was lost upon them; perhaps we ought to say that the Italian temperament, in art as in religion, was incapable of assimilating the vague yet powerful mysticism of the Teutonic races.

On the other hand, what they sacrificed of genuine Gothic character, was made good after their own fashion. Surface decoration, whether of fresco or mosaic, bronze-work or bas-relief, wood-carving or paneling in marble, baked clay or enamelled earthenware was never carried to such perfection in Gothic buildings of the purer type; nor had sculpture in the North an equal chance of detaching itself from the niche and tabernacle, which forced it to remain the slave of architecture. Thus the comparative defects of Italian Gothic were directly helpful in promoting those very arts for which the people had a genius unrivalled among modern nations.

It is only necessary to contrast the two finest cathedrals of this style, those of Siena and Orvieto, with two such buildings as the cathedrals of Rheims and Salisbury, in order to perceive the structural inferiority of the former, as well as their superiority for all subordinate artistic purposes. Long straight lines, low roofs, narrow windows, a façade of surprising splendour but without a strict relation to the structure of the nave and aisles, a cupola surmounting the intersection of nave, choir, and transepts; simple tribunes at the east end, a detached campanile, round columns instead of clustered piers, a mixture of semicircular and pointed arches; these are some of the most salient features of the Sienese Duomo. But the material is all magnificent; and the hand, obedient to the dictates of an artist's brain, has made itself felt on every square foot of the building. Alternate courses of white and black marble, cornices loaded with grave or animated portraits of the Popes, sculptured shrines, altars, pulpits, reliquaries, fonts and holy-water vases, panels of inlaid wood and pictured pavements, bronze candelabra and wrought-iron screens, gilding and colour and precious work of agate and lapis lazuli—the masterpieces of men famous each in his own line—delight the eye in all directions. The whole church is a miracle of richness, a radiant and glowing triumph of inventive genius, the product of a hundred master-craftsmen toiling through successive centuries to do their best. All its countless details are so harmonised by the controlling taste, so brought together piece by piece in obedience to artistic instinct, that the total effect is ravishingly beautiful. Yet it is clear that no one paramount idea, determining and organising all these marvels, existed in the mind of the first architect. In true Gothic work the details that make up the charm of this cathedral would have been subordinated to one architectonic thought; they would not have been suffered to assert their individuality, or to contribute, except as servants, to the whole effect. The northern Gothic church is like a body with several members; the southern Gothic church is an accretion of beautiful atoms.

The northern Gothic style corresponds to the national unity of federalised races, organised by a social hierarchy of mutually dependent classes. In the southern Gothic style we find a mirror of political diversity, independent personality, burgher-like equality, despotic will. Thus the specific qualities of Italy on her emergence from the Middle Ages may be traced by no undue exercise of the fancy in her monuments. They are emphatically the creation of citizens—of men, to use Giannotti's phrase, distinguished by alternating obedience and command, not ranked beneath a monarchy, but capable themselves of sovereign power.<sup>5</sup>

What has been said of Siena is no less true of the Duomo of Orvieto. Though it seems to aim at a severer Gothic, and though the façade is more architecturally planned, a single glance at the exterior of the edifice shows that the builders had no lively sense of the requirement of the style they used. What can be more melancholy than those blank walls, broken by small round recesses protruding from the side chapels of the nave, those gaunt and barren angles at the east end, and those few pinnacles appended at a venture? It is clear that the spirit of the northern Gothic manner has been wholly misconceived. On the other hand, the interior is noble. The feeling for space possessed by the architect has expressed itself in proportions large and solemn; the area enclosed, though somewhat cold and vacuous to northern taste, is at least impressive by its severe harmony. But the real attractions of the church are isolated details. Wherever the individual artist-mind has had occasion to emerge, there our gaze is riveted, our criticism challenged, our admiration won. The frescoes of Signorelli, the bas-reliefs of the Pisani, the statuary of Lo Scalza and Mosca, the tarsia of the choir stalls, the Alexandrine work and mosaics of the façade, the bronzes placed upon its brackets, and the wrought acanthus scrolls of its superb pilasters—these are the objects for inexhaustible wonder in the cathedral of Orvieto. On approaching a building of this type, we must abandon our conceptions of organic architecture: only the Greek and northern Gothic styles deserve that epithet. We must not seek for severe discipline and architectonic design. Instead of one presiding, all-determining idea, we must be prepared to welcome a wealth of separate beauties, wrought out by men of independent genius, whereby each part is made a masterpiece, and many diverse elements become a whole of picturesque rather than architectural impressiveness.

It would not be difficult to extend this kind of criticism to the Duomo of Milan. Speaking strictly, a more unlucky combination of different styles—the pyramidal façade of Lombard architecture and the long thin lights of German Gothic, for example—a clumsier misuse of ill-appropriated details in the heavy piers of the nave, or a more disastrous adjustment of the monster windows to the main lines of the nave and aisles, could scarcely be imagined. Yet no other church, perhaps, in Europe leaves the same impression of the marvellous upon the fancy.

<sup>5</sup> See Vol. I., *Age of the Despots*, p. 99.

The splendour of its pure white marble, blushing with the rose of evening or of dawn, radiant in noonday sunlight, and fabulously fairy-like beneath the moon and stars, the multitudes of statues sharply cut against a clear blue sky, and gazing at the Alps across that memorable tract of plain, the immense space and light-irradiated gloom of the interior, the deep tone of the bells above at a vast distance, and the gorgeous colours of the painted glass, contribute to a scenical effect unparalleled in Christendom.

The two styles, Lombard and Gothic, of which I have been speaking, were both in a certain sense exotic. Within the great cities the pith of the population was Latin; and no style of building that did not continue the tradition of the Romans, in the spirit of the Roman manner, and with strict observance of its details, satisfied them. It was a main feature of the Renaissance that, when the Italians undertook the task of reuniting themselves by study with the past, they abandoned all other forms of architecture, and did their best to create one in harmony with the relics of Latin monuments. To trace the history of this revived classic architecture will occupy me later in this chapter; but for the moment it is necessary to turn aside and consider briefly the secular buildings of Italy before the date of the Renaissance proper.

About the same time that the cathedrals were being built, the nobles filled the towns with fortresses. These at first were gaunt and unsightly; how overcrowded with tall bare towers a mediæval Italian city could be, is still shown by San Gimignano, the only existing instance where the *torroni* have been left untouched.<sup>6</sup> In course of time, when the aristocracy came to be fused with the burghers, and public order was maintained by law in the great cities, these forts made way for spacious palaces. The temper of the citizens in each place and the local character of artistic taste determined the specific features of domestic as of ecclesiastical architecture. Though it is hard to define what are the social differences expressed by the large quadrangles of Francesco Sforza's hospital at Milan, and the heavy cube of the Riccardi palace at Florence, we feel that the *genius loci* has in each case controlled the architect. The sunny spaces of the one building, with its terra-cotta traceries of birds and grapes and Cupids, contrast with the stern brown mouldings and impenetrable solidity of the other. That the one was raised by the munificence of a sovereign in his capital, while the other was the dwelling of a burgher in a city proud of its antique sobriety, goes some way to explain the difference. In like manner the court-life of a dynastic principality produced the castle of Urbino, so diverse in its style and adaptation from the ostentatious mansions of the Genoese merchants. It is not fanciful to say that the civic life of a free and factious republic is represented by the heavy walls and narrow windows of Florentine dwelling-places. In their rings of iron, welded between rock and rock about the basement, as though for the beginning of a barri-

<sup>6</sup> Pavia, it may be mentioned, has still many towers standing, and the two at Bologna are famous.

cade—in their torch-rests of wrought metal, gloomy portals and dimly-lighted courts, we trace the habits of caution and reserve that marked the men who led the parties of Uberti and Albizzi. The Sienese palaces are lighter and more elegant in style, as belonging to a people proverbially pleasure-loving; while a still more sumptuous and secure mode of life finds expression in the open loggie and spacious staircases of Venice. The graceful buildings which overhang the Grand Canal are exactly fitted for an oligarchy, sure of its own authority and loved of the people. Feudal despotism, on the contrary, reigns in the heart of Ferrara, where the Este's stronghold, moated, draw-bridged, and portcullised, casting dense shadow over the water that protects the dungeons, still seems to threaten the public square and overawe the homes of men.

To the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, again, we owe the town halls and public palaces that form so prominent a feature in the city architecture of Italy. The central vitality of once powerful States is symbolised in the *broletti* of the Lombard cities, dusty and abandoned now in spite of their clear-cut terra-cotta traceries. There is something strangely melancholy in their desolation. Wandering through the vast hall of the Ragione at Padua, where the very shadows seem asleep as they glide over the wide unpeopled floor, it is not easy to remember that this was once the theatre of eager intrigues, ere the busy stir of the old burgh was utterly extinguished. Few of these public palaces have the good fortune to be distinguished, like that of the Doge at Venice, by world-historical memories and by works of art as yet unrivalled. The spirit of the Venetian Republic still lives in that unique building. Architects may tell us that its Gothic arcades are melodramatic; sculptors may depreciate the decorative work of Sansovino; painters may assert that the genius of Titian, Tintoret, and Veronese shines elsewhere with greater lustre. Yet the poet clings with ever-deepening admiration to the sea-born palace of the ancient mistress of the sea, and the historian feels that here, as at Athens, art has made the past towards which he looks eternal.

Two other great Italian houses of the Commonwealth, rearing their towers above the town for tocsin and for ward, owe immortality to their intrinsic beauty. These are the Palazzo Pubblico of Siena and the Palazzo Vecchio of Florence. Few buildings in Europe are more picturesquely fascinating than the palace of Siena, with its outlook over hill and dale to cloud-capped Monte Amiata. Yet, in spite of its unparalleled position on the curved and sloping piazza, where the *contrade* of Siena have run their *palio* for centuries, this palace lacks the vivid interest attaching to the home Arnolfo raised at Florence for the rulers of his native city. During their term of office the Priors never quitted the Palace of the Signory. All deliberations on state affairs took place within its walls, and its bell was the pulse that told how the heart of Florence throbbed. The architect of this huge mass of masonry was Arnolfo del Cambio, one of the greatest builders of the Middle Ages, a

man who may be called the Michael Angelo of the thirteenth century.<sup>7</sup> In 1298 he was ordered to erect a dwelling-place for the Commonwealth, to the end that the people might be protected in their fortress from the violence of the nobles. The building of the palace and the levelling of the square around it were attended with circumstances that bring forcibly before our minds the stern conditions of republican life in mediæval Italy. A block of houses had to be bought from the family of Foraboschi; and their tower, called Torre della Vacca, was raised and turned into the belfry of the Priors. There was not room enough, however, to construct the palace itself with right angles, unless it were extended into the open space where once had stood the houses of the Uberti, 'traitors to Florence and Ghibellines.' In destroying these, the burghers had decreed that thenceforth for ever the feet of men should pass where the hearths of the proscribed nobles once had blazed. Arnolfo begged that he might trespass on this site; but the people refused permission. Where the traitors' nest had been, there the sacred foundations of the public house should not be laid. Consequently the Florentine Palazzo is, was, and will be cramped of its correct proportions.<sup>8</sup>

No Italian architect has enjoyed the proud privilege of stamping his own individuality more strongly on his native city than Arnolfo; and for this reason it may be permitted to enlarge upon his labours here. When we take our stand upon the hill of Samminiato, the Florence at our feet owes her physiognomy in a great measure to this man. The tall tower of the Palazzo Vecchio, the bulk of the Duomo, and the long low oblong mass of Santa Croce are all his. His too are the walls that define the city of flowers from the gardens round about her.<sup>9</sup> Even the master-works of his successors subordinate their beauty to his first conception. Giotto's campanile, Brunelleschi's cupola, and Orcagna's church of Orsammichele, in spite of their undoubted and authentic originality, are placed where he had planned.

In 1294 the Florentines determined to rebuild their mother-church upon a scale of unexampled grandeur. The commission given to their architect displays so strikingly the lordly spirit in which these burghers set about the work, that, thought it has been often quoted, a portion of the document shall be recited here. 'Since the highest mark of prudence in a people of noble origin is to proceed in the management of their affairs so that their magnanimity and wisdom may be evinced in their outward acts, we order Arnolfo, head-master of our commune, to make a design for the renovation of Santa Reparata in a style of magnificence

<sup>7</sup> Arnolfo was born in 1232 at Colle, in the Val d'Elsa. He was a sculptor as well as architect, the assistant of Niccola Pisano at Siena, and the maker of the tomb of Cardinal de Braye at Orvieto. This tomb is remarkable as the earliest instance of the canopy withdrawn by attendant angels from the dead man's form, afterwards so frequently adopted by the Pisan school.

<sup>8</sup> Giov. Villani, viii. 26.

<sup>9</sup> See *Milizia*, vol. i. p. 135. These walls were not finished till some time after Arnolfo's death. They lost their ornament of towers in the siege of 1529, and they are now being rapidly destroyed.



which neither the industry nor the power of man can surpass, that it may harmonise with the opinion of many wise persons in this city and state, who think that this commune should not engage in any enterprise unless its intention be to make the result correspond with that noblest sort of heart which is composed of the united will of many citizens.<sup>10</sup> From Giovanni Villani we learn what taxes were levied by the Wool-Guild, and set apart in 1331 for the completion of the building. They were raised upon all goods bought or sold within the city in two separate rates, the net produce amounting in the first year to 2,000 lire.<sup>11</sup> The cathedral designed by Arnolfo was of vast dimensions: it covers 84,802 feet, while that of Cologne covers 81,461 feet; and, says Ferguson, 'as far as mere conception of plan goes, there can be little doubt but that the Florentine cathedral far surpasses its German rival.'<sup>12</sup> Nothing, indeed, can be imagined more noble than the scheme of this huge edifice. Studying its ground-plan, and noting how the nave unfolds into a mighty octagon, which in its turn displays three well-proportioned apses, we are induced to think that a sublimer thought has never been expressed in stone. At this point, however, our admiration receives a check. In the execution of the parts the builder dwarfed what had been conceived on so magnificent a scale; aiming at colossal simplicity, he failed to secure the multiplicity of subordinated members essential to the total effect of size. 'Like all inexperienced architects, he seems to have thought that greatness of parts would add to the greatness of the whole, and in consequence used only four great arches in the whole length of his nave, giving the central aisle a width of fifty-five feet clear. The whole width is within ten feet of that of Cologne, and the height about the same; and yet, in appearance, the height is about half, and the breadth less than half, owing to the better proportion of the parts and to the superior appropriateness in the details on the part of the German cathedral.'<sup>13</sup> The truth of these remarks will be felt by every one on whom the ponderous vacuity of the interior has weighed. Other notable defects there are too in this building, proceeding chiefly from the Italian misconception of Gothic style. The windows are few and narrow, so that little light even at noonday struggles through them; and broad barren spaces of grey walls oppress the eye. Externally the whole church is panelled with parti-coloured marbles, according to Florentine custom; but this panelling bears no relation to the structure: it is so much surface decoration possessing value chiefly for the colourist. Arnolfo died before the dome, as he designed it, could be placed upon the octagon, and nothing is known for certain about the form he meant it to assume. It seems, however, probable that he intended to

<sup>10</sup> From Perkins's *Tuscan Sculptors*, vol. i. p. 54. A recent work by Signor C. J. Cavallucci, entitled *S. Maria del Fiore*, Firenze, 1881, has created a revolution in our knowledge regarding this church.

<sup>11</sup> Giov. Villani, x. 192.

<sup>12</sup> *Illustrated Handbook of Architecture*, book vi. chap. 1.

<sup>13</sup> *Id.*

adopt something similar to the dome of Chiaravalle, which ends, after a succession of narrowing octagons, in a slender conical pyramid.<sup>14</sup> Subordinate spires would then have been placed at each of the four angles where the nave and transepts intersect; and the whole external effect, for richness and variety, would have outrivalled that of any European building. It is well known that the erection of the dome was finally entrusted to Brunelleschi in 1420. Arnolfo's church now sustains in air an octagonal cupola of the simplest possible design, in height and size rivalling that of S. Peter's. It was thus that the genius of the Renaissance completed what the genius of the Middle Ages had begun. But in Italy there was no real break between the two periods. Though Arnolfo employed the Pointed style in his design, we find nothing genuinely Gothic in the church. It has no pinnacles, flying buttresses, side chapels, or subordinate supports. To use the phrase of Michelet, who has chosen the dramatic episode of Brunelleschi's intervention in the rearing of the dome for a parable of the Renaissance, 'the colossal church stood up simply, naturally, as a strong man in the morning rises from his bed without the need of staff or crutch.'<sup>15</sup> This indeed is the glory of Italian as compared with Northern architecture. The Italians valued the strength of simple perspicuity: all the best works of their builders are geometrical ideas of the purest kind translated into stone. It is, however, true that the gain of vast aerial space was hardly sufficient to compensate for the impression of emptiness they leave upon the senses. We feel this very strongly when we study the model prepared by Bramante's pupil, Cristoforo Rocchi, for the cathedral of Pavia; yet here we see the neo-Latin genius of the Italian artist working freely in an element exactly suited to his powers. When the same order of genius sought to express its conception through the language of the Gothic style, the result was invariably defective.<sup>16</sup>

The classical revival of the fifteenth century made itself immediately felt in architecture; and Brunelleschi's visit to Rome in 1403 may be fixed as the date of the Renaissance in this art. Gothic, as we have already seen, was an alien in Italy. Its importation from the North had checked the free development of national architecture, which in the eleventh century began at Pisa by a conscious return to classic details. But the reign of Gothic was destined to be brief. Petrarch and Boccac-

<sup>14</sup> See Gruner's *Terra Cotta Architecture of North Italy*, plates 3 and 4.

<sup>15</sup> Compare what Alberti says in his preface to the Treatise on Painting, *Opere*, vol. iv. p. 12. 'Chi mai sì duro e sì invido non lodasse Pippo architetto vendendo quì struttura sì grande, erta sopra i cieli, ampla da coprire con sua ombra tutti i popoli toscani, fatta senza alcuno aiuto di travamenti o di copia di legname, quale artificio certo, se io ben giudico, come a questi tempi era incredibile potersi, così forse appresso gli antichi fu non saputo nè conosciuto?

<sup>16</sup> What the church of S. Petronio at Bologna would have been, if it had been completed on the scale contemplated, can hardly be imagined. As it stands, it is immense, and coldly bare in its immensity. Yet the present church is but the nave of a temple designed with transepts and choir. The length was to have been 800 feet, the width of the transepts 525, the dome 183 feet in diameter. A building so colossal in extent, and so monotonously meagre in conception, could not but have been a failure.

cio, as I showed in my last volume, turned the whole intellectual energy of the Florentines into the channels of Latin and Greek scholarship.<sup>17</sup> The ancient world absorbed all interests, and the Italians with one will shook themselves free of the mediæval style they never rightly understood, and which they henceforth stigmatised as barbarous.<sup>18</sup>

The problem that occupied all the Renaissance architects was how to restore the manner of ancient Rome as far as possible, adapting it to the modern requirements of ecclesiastical, civic, and domestic buildings. Of Greek art they knew comparatively nothing: nor indeed could Greek architecture have offered for their purpose the same plastic elements as Roman—itself a derived style, admitting of easier adjustment to modern uses than the inflexibly pure art of Greece. At the same time they possessed but imperfect fragments of Roman work. The ruins of baths, theatres, tombs, temple-fronts, and triumphal arches, were of little immediate assistance in the labour of designing churches and palaces. All that the architects could do, after familiarising themselves with the remains of ancient Rome, and assimilating the spirit of Roman art, was to clothe their own inventions with classic details. The form and structure of their edifices were modern; the parts were copied from antique models. A want of organic unity and structural sincerity is always the result of those necessities under which a secondary and adapted style must labour; and thus the pseudo-Roman buildings even of the best Renaissance period display faults similar to those of the Italian Gothic. While they are remarkable for grandeur of effect in all that concerns the distribution of light and shade, the covering and enclosing of space, and the disposition of masses, they show at best but a superficial correspondence between the borrowed forms and the construction these are used to mask.<sup>19</sup> The edifices of this period abound in more or less successful shams, in surface decoration more or less pleasing to the eye; their real greatness, meanwhile, consists in the feeling for spatial proportions and for linear harmonies possessed by their architects.

Three periods in the development of Renaissance architecture may be roughly marked.<sup>20</sup> The first, extending from 1420 to 1500, is the age of experiment and of luxuriant inventiveness. The second embraces the first forty years of the sixteenth century. The most perfect buildings of the Italian Renaissance were produced within this short space of

<sup>17</sup> *Revival of Learning*, chap. i.

<sup>18</sup> The following passage quoted from Milizia, *Memorie degli Architetti*, Parma, 1781, vol. i. p. 135, illustrates the contemptuous attitude of Italian critics to Gothic architecture. After describing Arnolfo's building of the Florentine Duomo, he proceeds: 'In questo Architetto si vide qualche leggiadro barlume di buona Architettura, come di Pittura in Cimabue suo contemporaneo. Ma in tutte le cose e fisiche e morali i passaggi si fanno per insensibili gradaglioni; onde per lungo tempo ancora si mantenne il corrotto gusto, che si può chiamare Arabo-Tedesco.'

<sup>19</sup> Observe, for example, the casing of a Gothic church at Rimini by Alberti with a series of Roman arches; or the façade of S. Andrea at Mantua, where the vast and lofty central arch leads, not into the nave itself, but into a shallow vestibule.

<sup>20</sup> See Burckhardt, *Cicerone*, vol. i. p. 167.

time. The third, again comprising about forty years, from 1540 to 1580, leads onward to the reign of mannerism and exaggeration, called by the Italians *barocco*. In itself the third period is distinguished by a scrupulous purism bordering upon pedantry, strict adherence to theoretical rules, and sacrifice of inventive qualities to established canons. To do more than briefly indicate the masterpieces of these three periods, would be impossible in a work that does not pretend to treat of architecture exhaustively: and yet to omit all notice of the builders of this age and of their styles, would be to neglect the most important art-phase of the time I have undertaken to illustrate.

In the first period we are bewildered by the luxuriance of creative powers and by the rioting of the fancy in all forms of beauty indiscriminately mingled. In general we detect a striving after effects not fully realised, and a tendency to indulge in superfluous ornament without regard for strictness of design. The imperfect comprehension of classical models and the exuberant vivacity of the imagination in the fifteenth century account for the florid work of this time. Something too is left of mediæval fancy; the details borrowed from the antique undergo fantastic transmutation at the hands of men accustomed to the vehement emotion of the romantic ages. Whatever the Renaissance took from antique art, it was at first unable to assimilate either the moderation of the Greeks or the practical sobriety of the Romans. Christianity had deepened and intensified the sources of imaginative life; and just as reminiscences of classic style impaired Italian Gothic, so now a trace of Gothic is perceptible in the would-be classic work of the Revival. The result of these combined influences was a wonderful and many-featured hybrid, best represented in one monument by the façade of the Certosa at Pavia. While characterising the work of the earlier Renaissance as fused of divers manners, we must not forget that it was truly living, full of purpose, and according to its own standard sincere. It was a new birth; no mere repetition of something dead and gone, but the product of vivid forces stirred to original creativeness by admiration for the past. It corresponded, moreover, with exquisite exactitude to the halting of the conscience between Christianity and Paganism, and to the blent beauty that the poets loved. On reeds dropped from the hands of dead Pan the artists of this period, each in his own sphere, piped ditties of romance.

To these general remarks upon the style of the first period the Florentine architects offer an exception; and yet the first marked sign of a new era in the art of building was given at Florence. Purity of taste and firmness of judgment, combined with scientific accuracy, were always distinctive of Florentines. To such an extent did these qualities determine their treatment of the arts that acute critics have been found to tax them—and in my opinion justly—with hardness and frigidity.<sup>21</sup> Brunelleschi in 1425 designed the basilica of S. Lorenzo after an original but truly classic type, remarkable for its sobriety and correctness.

<sup>21</sup> See De Stendhal, *Histoire de la Peinture in Italie*, p. 122.

What he had learned from the ruins of Rome he here applied in obedience to his own artistic instinct. S. Lorenzo is a columnar edifice with round arches and semicircular apses. Not a form or detail in the whole church is strictly speaking at variance with Roman precedent; and yet the general effect resembles nothing we possess of antique work. It is a masterpiece of intelligent Renaissance adaptation. The same is true of S. Spirito, built in 1470, after Brunelleschi's death, according to his plans. The extraordinary capacity of this great architect will, however, win more homage from ordinary observers when they contemplate the Pitti Palace and the cupola of the cathedral. Both of these are master-works of personal originality. What is Roman in the Pitti Palace, is the robust simplicity of massive strength; but it is certain that no patrician of the republic or the empire inhabited a house at all resembling this. The domestic habits of the Middle Ages, armed for self-defence, and on guard against invasion from without, still find expression in the solid bulk of this forbidding dwelling-place, although its majesty and largeness show that the reign of milder and more courtly manners has begun. To speak of the cupola of the Duomo in connection with a simple revival of Roman taste, would be equally inappropriate. It remains a *tour de force* of individual genius, cultivated by the experience of Gothic vault-building, and penetrated with the greatness of imperial Rome. Its spirit of dauntless audacity and severe concentration alone is antique.

Almost contemporary with Brunelleschi was Leo Battista Alberti, a Florentine, who, working upon somewhat different principles, sought more closely to reproduce the actual elements of Roman architecture.<sup>22</sup> In his remodelling of S. Francesco at Rimini the type he followed was that of the triumphal arch, and what was finished of that wonderful façade, remains to prove how much might have been made of well-proportioned pilasters and nobly curved arcades.<sup>23</sup> The same principle is carried out in S. Andrea at Mantua. The frontispiece of this church is a gigantic arch of triumph; the interior is noticeable for its simple harmony of parts, adopted from the vaulted baths of Rome. The combination of these antique details in an imposing structure implied a high imaginative faculty at a moment when the rules of classic architecture had not been as yet reduced to method. Yet the weakness of Alberti's principle is revealed when we consider that here the lofty central arch of the façade serves only for a decoration. Too high and spacious even for the chariots of a Roman triumph, it forms an inappropriate entrance to the modest vestibule of a Christian church.

Like Brunelleschi, Alberti applied his talents to the building of a palace in Florence that became a model to subsequent architects. The

<sup>22</sup> For a notice of his life, see *The Revival of Learning*, p. 485.

<sup>23</sup> The Arch of Augustus at Rimini was the model followed by Alberti in this façade. He intended to cover the church with a cupola, as may be seen from the design on a medal of Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta. See too the letter written by him to Matteo da Bastia, Alberti, *Opere*, vol. vi. p. 397.

Palazzo Rucellai retains many details of the mediæval Tuscan style, especially in the windows divided by slender pilasters. But the three orders introduced by way of surface decoration, the doorways, and the cornices, are transcripts from Roman ruins. This building, one of the most beautiful in Italy, was copied by Francesco di Giorgio and Bernardo Fiorentino for the palaces they constructed at Pienza.

This was the age of sumptuous palace-building; and for no purpose was the early Renaissance style better adapted than for the erection of dwelling-houses that should match the free and worldly splendour of those times. The just medium between mediæval massiveness and classic simplicity was attained in countless buildings beautiful and various beyond description. Bologna is full of them; and Urbino, in the Ducal Palace, contains one specimen unexampled in extent and unique in interest. Yet here, as in all departments of fine art, Florence takes the lead. After Brunelleschi and Alberti came Michelozzo, the favourite architect of Cosimo de' Medici; Benedetto da Majano; Giuliano and Antonio di San Gallo; and Il Cronaca. Cosimo de' Medici, having said that 'envy is a plant no man should water,' denied himself the monumental house designed by Brunelleschi, and chose instead the modest plan of Michelozzo. Brunelleschi had meant to build the Casa Medici along one side of the Piazza di S. Lorenzo; but when Cosimo refused his project, he broke up the model he had made, to the great loss of students of this age of architecture. Michelozzo was then commissioned to raise the mighty, but comparatively humble, Riccardi Palace at the corner of the Via Larga, which continued to be the residence of the Medici through all their chequered history, until at last they took possession of the Palazzo Pitti.<sup>24</sup> The most beautiful of all Florentine dwelling-houses designed at this period is that which Benedetto da Majano built for Filippo Strozzi. Combining the burgher-like austerity of antecedent ages with a grandeur and a breadth of style peculiar to the Renaissance, the Palazzo Strozzi may be chosen as the perfect type of Florentine domestic architecture.<sup>25</sup> Other cities were supplied by Florence with builders, and Milan owed her fanciful Ospedale Maggiore at this epoch to Antonio Filarete, a Florentine. This great edifice illustrates the emancipation from fixed rule that distinguishes much of the architecture of the earlier Renaissance. The detail is not unfrequently Gothic, especially in the pointed windows; but the feeling of the whole

<sup>24</sup> This ancestral palace of the Medici passed in 1659 to the Marchese Gabriele Riccardi, from the Duke Francesco II.

<sup>25</sup> Von Reumont, *Lorenzo de' Medici*, vol. ii. pp. 187-191, may be consulted for an interesting account of the building of this *Casa Grande* by Filippo Strozzi. The preparations were made with great caution, lest it should seem that a work too magnificent for a simple citizen was being undertaken; in particular, Filippo so contrived that the costly *opus rusticum* employed in the construction of the basement should appear to have been forced upon him. This is characteristic of Florence in the days of Cosimo. The foundation stone was laid in the morning of August 16, 1489, at the moment when the sun arose above the summits of the Casentino. The hour, prescribed by astrologers as propitious, had been settled by the horoscope; masses meanwhile were said in several churches, and alms distributed.

structure, in its airy space and lightness, delicate terra-cotta mouldings, and open loggie, is truly Cinque Cento.<sup>26</sup>

In no other style than this of the earlier Renaissance is the builder more inseparably connected with the decorator. The labours of the stone-carver, who provided altars chased with Scripture histories in high relief, pulpits hung against a column of the nave, tombs with canopies and floral garlands, organ galleries enriched with bas-reliefs of singing boys, ciboria with kneeling and adoring angels, marble tabernacles for relics, vases for holy water, fountains and fountains, and all the indescribable wealth of scrolls and friezes around doors and screens and balustrades that fence the choir, are added to those of the bronze-founder, with his mighty doors and pendent lamps, his candelabra sustained by angels, torch-rests and rings, embossed basements for banners of state, and portraits of recumbent senators or prelates.<sup>27</sup> The wood carver contributes *tarsia* like that of Fra Giovanni da Verona.<sup>28</sup> The worker in wrought iron welds such screens as guard the chapel of the Sacra Cintola at Prato. The Robbias prepare their delicately-toned reliefs for the lunettes above the doorways. Modellers in clay produce the terra-cotta work of the Certosa, or the carola of angels who surround the little cupola behind the church of S. Eustorgio at Milan.<sup>29</sup> Meanwhile mosaics are provided for the dome or let into the floor;<sup>30</sup> agates and marbles and lapis lazuli are pieced together for altar fronts and panellings;<sup>31</sup> stalls are carved into fantastic patterns, and heavy roofs are embossed

<sup>26</sup> Antonio Filarete, or Averulino, architect and sculptor, was author of a treatise on the building of the ideal city, one of the most curious specimens of Renaissance fancy, to judge from the account rendered of the manuscript by Rio, vol. iii. pp. 321-328.

<sup>27</sup> Matteo Civitale, Benedetto da Majano, Mino da Fiesole, Luca della Robbia, Donatello, Jacopo della Quercia, Lo Scalza, Omodeo, and the Sansovini, not to mention less illustrious sculptors, filled the churches of Italy with this elaborate stone-work. Among the bronze-founders it is enough to name Ghiberti, Antonio Filarete, Antonio Pollajuolo, Donatello and his pupil Bertoldo, Andrea Riccio, the master of the candelabrum in S. Antonio at Padua, Jacopo Sansovino, the master of the door of the sacristy in S. Mark's at Venice, Alessandro Leopardi, the master of the standard-pedestals of the Piazza of S. Mark's. I do not mean these lists to be in any sense exhaustive, but simply to remind the reader of the rare and many-sided men of genius who devoted their abilities to this kind of work. Some of their masterpieces will be noticed in detail in the chapter on Sculpture.

<sup>28</sup> Especially his work at Monte Oliveto, near Siena, and in the church of Monte Oliveto at Naples. The Sala del Cambio at Perugia may also be cited as rich in tarsia-work designed by Perugino, while the church of S. Pietro de' Cassinensi outside the city is a museum of masterpieces executed by Fra Damiano da Bergamo and Stefano da Bergamo from designs of Raphael. Not less beautiful are the inlaid wood panels in the Palace of Urbino, by Maestro Giacomo of Florence.

<sup>29</sup> The churches and palaces of Lombardy are peculiarly rich in this kind of decoration. The façade of the Oratory of S. Bernadino at Perugia, designed and executed by Agostino di Duccio, is a masterpiece of rare beauty in this style.

<sup>30</sup> Not to mention the Renaissance mosaics of S. Mark's at Venice, the cupola of S. Maria del Popolo at Rome, executed in mosaic by Raphael, deserves special mention. A work illustrative of this cupola is one of Ludwig Grüner's best publications.

<sup>31</sup> South Italy and Florence are distinguished by two marked styles in this decoration of inlaid marbles or *opera di commesso*. Compare the Medicean chapel in S. Lorenzo, for instance, with the high altar of the cathedral of Messina.



with figures of the saints and armorial emblems.<sup>32</sup> Tapestry is woven from the designs of excellent masters;<sup>33</sup> great painters contribute arabesques of fresco or of stucco mixed with gilding, and glass is coloured from the outlines of such draughtsmen as Ghiberti.

Some of the decorative elements I have hastily enumerated will be treated in connection with the respective arts of sculpture and painting. The fact, meanwhile, deserves notice that they received a new development in relation to architecture during the first period of the Renaissance, and that they formed, as it were, an integral part of its main æsthetical purpose. Strip a chapel of the fifteenth century of ornamental adjuncts, and an uninteresting shell is left: what, for instance, would the façades of the Certosa and the Cappella Colleoni be without their sculptured and inlaid marbles? The genius of the age found scope in subordinate details, and the most successful architect was the man who combined in himself a feeling for the capacities of the greatest number of associated arts. As the consequence of this profuse expenditure of loving care on every detail, the monuments of architecture belonging to the earlier Renaissance have a poetry that compensates for structural defects; just as its wildest literary extravagances—the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, for instance—have a charm of wanton fancy and young joy that atones to sympathetic students for intolerable pedantries.

In the second period the faults of the first group of Renaissance builders were in a large measure overcome, and their striving after the production of new yet classic form was more completely realised. The reckless employment of luxuriant decoration yielded to a chastened taste, without the sacrifice of beauty or magnificence. Style was refined; the construction of large buildings was better understood, and the instinct for what lies within the means of a revived and secondary manner was more true.

To Bramante must be assigned the foremost place among the architects of the golden age.<sup>34</sup> Though little of his work survives entire and unspoiled, it is clear that he exercised the profoundest influence over both successors and contemporaries. What they chiefly owed to him was the proper subordination of beauty in details to the grandeur of simplicity and to unity of effect. He came at a moment when constructive problems had been solved, when mechanical means were perfected, and when the sister arts had reached their highest point. His early training in Lombardy accustomed him to the adoption of clustered piers instead of single columns, to semicircular apses and niches, and to the free use of minor cupolas—elements of design introduced neither by Brunelleschi nor by Alberti into the Renaissance style of Florence, but which were destined to determine the future of architecture for all Italy.

<sup>32</sup> The roof of the Duomo at Volterra is a fine specimen.

<sup>33</sup> It will not be forgotten that Raphael's cartoons were made for tapestry.

<sup>34</sup> Bramante Lazzari was born at Castel Durante, near Urbino, in 1444. He spent the early years of his architect's life in Lombardy, in the service of Lodovico Sforza, and came probably to Rome upon his patron's downfall in 1499.

Nature had gifted Bramante with calm judgment and refined taste; his sense of the right limitations of the pseudo-Roman style was exquisite, and his feeling for structural symmetry was just. If his manner strikes us as somewhat cold and abstract when compared with the more genial audacities of the earlier Renaissance, we must remember how salutary was the example of a rigorous and modest manner in an age which required above all things to be preserved from its own luxuriant waywardness of fancy. It is hard to say how much of the work ascribed to Bramante in Northern Italy is genuine; most of it, at any rate, belongs to the manner of his youth. The Church of S. Maria della Consolazione at Todi, the palace of the Cancelleria at Rome, and the unfinished cathedral of Pavia, enable us to comprehend the general character of this great architect's refined and noble manner. S. Peter's, it may be said in passing, retains, in spite of all subsequent modifications, many essentially Bramantesque features—especially in the distribution of the piers and rounded niches.

Bramante formed no school strictly so called, though his pupils, Cristoforo Rocchi and Ventura Vitoni, carried out his principles of building at Pavia and Pistoja. Vitoni's church of the Umiltà in the latter city is a pure example of conscientious neo-Roman architecture. It consists of a large octagon surmounted by a dome and preceded by a lofty vaulted atrium or vestibule. The single round arch of this vestibule repeats the *testudo* of a Roman bath, and the decorative details are accurately reproduced from similar monuments. Unfortunately, Giorgio Vasari, who was employed to finish the cupola, spoiled its effect by raising it upon an ugly attic; it is probable that the church, as designed by Vitoni, would have presented the appearance of a miniature Pantheon. At Rome the influence of Bramante was propagated through Raphael, Giulio Romano, and Baldassare Peruzzi. Raphael's claim to consideration as an architect rests upon the Palazzi Vidoni and Pandolfini, the Capella Chigi in S. Maria del Popolo, and the Villa Madama. The last-named building, executed by Giulio Romano after Raphael's design, is carried out in a style so forcible as to make us fancy that the pupil had a larger share in its creation than his teacher. These works, however, sink into insignificance before the Palazzo del Te at Mantua, the masterpiece of Giulio's genius. This most noble of Italian pleasure-houses remains to show what the imagination of a poet-artist could recover from the splendour of old Rome and adapt to the use of his own age. The vaults of the Thermæ of Titus, with their cameos of stucco and frescoed arabesques, are here repeated on a scale and with an exuberance of invention that surpass the model. Open loggie yield fair prospect over what were once trim gardens; spacious halls, adorned with frescoes in the vehement and gorgeous style of the Roman school, form a fit theatre for the grand parade-life of an Italian prince. The whole is Pagan in its pride and sensuality, its prodigality of strength and insolence of freedom. Having seen this palace, we do not wonder that the fame of Giulio flew across the Alps and lived upon the lips of

Shakspeare: for in his master-work at Mantua he collected, as it were, and epitomised in one building all that enthralled the fancy of the Northern nations when they thought of Italy.

A pendant to the Palazzo del Te is the Villa Farnesina, raised on the banks of the Tiber by Baldassare Peruzzi for his fellow townsman Agostino Chigi of Siena. It is an idyll placed beside a lyric ode, gentler and quieter in style, yet full of grace, breathing the large and liberal spirit of enjoyment that characterised the age of Leo. The frescoes of Galatea and Psyche, executed by Raphael and his pupils, have made this villa famous in the annals of Italian painting. The memory of the Roman banker's splendid style of living marks it out as no less noteworthy in the history of Renaissance manners.<sup>35</sup>

Among the great edifices of this second period we may reckon Jacopo Sansovino's buildings at Venice, though they approximate rather to the style of the earlier Renaissance in all that concerns exuberance of decorative detail. The Venetians, somewhat behind the rest of Italy in the development of the fine arts, were at the height of prosperity and wealth during the middle period of the Renaissance; and no city is more rich in monuments of the florid style. Something of their own delight in sensuous magnificence they communicated even to the foreigners who dwelt among them. The court of the Ducal Palace, the Scuola di S. Rocco, the Palazzo Corner, and the Palazzo Vendramini-Calergi, illustrate the strong yet fanciful *bravura* style that pleased the aristocracy of Venice. Nowhere else does the architecture of the Middle Ages melt by more imperceptible degrees into that of the Revival, retaining through all changes the impress of a people splendour-loving in the highest sense. The Library of S. Mark, built by Sansovino in 1536, remains, however, the crowning triumph of Venetian art. It is impossible to contemplate its noble double row of open arches without feeling the eloquence of rhetoric so brilliant, without echoing the judgment of Palladio, that nothing more sumptuous or beautiful had been invented since the age of ancient Rome.

Time would fail to tell of all the architects who crowd the first half of the sixteenth century—of Antonio di San Gallo, famous for fortifications; of Baccio d'Agnolo, who raised the Campanile of S. Spirito at Florence; of Giovanni Maria Falconetto, to whose genius Padua owed so many princely edifices; of Michele Sanmicheli, the military architect of Verona, and the builder of five mighty palaces for the nobles of his native city. Yet the greatest name of all this period cannot be omitted: Michael Angelo must be added to the list of builders in the golden age. In architecture, as in sculpture, he not only bequeathed to posterity masterpieces of individual energy and original invention, in their kind unrivalled; but he also prepared for his successors a false way of working, and justified by his example the extravagances of the decadence. Without noticing the façade designed for S. Lorenzo at Florence, the transformation of the Baths of Diocletian into a church, the remodelling of

<sup>35</sup> See *Age of the Despots*, p. 219.

the Capitoline buildings, and the continuation of the Palazzo Farnese—works that either exist only in drawings or have been confused by later alterations—it is enough here to mention the Sagrestia Nuova of S. Lorenzo and the cupola of S. Peter's. The sacristy may be looked on either as the masterpiece of a sculptor who required fit setting for his statues, or of an architect who designed statues to enhance the structure he had planned. Both arts are used with equal ease, nor has the genius of Michael Angelo dealt more masterfully with the human frame than with the forms of Roman architecture in this chapel. He seems to have paid no heed to classic precedent, and to have taken no pains to adapt the parts to the structural purpose of the building. It was enough for him to create a wholly novel framework for the modern miracle of sculpture it enshrines, attending to such rules of composition as determine light and shade, and seeking by the slightness of mouldings and pilasters to enhance the terrible and massive forms that brood above the Medicean tombs. The result is a product of picturesque and plastic art, as true to the Michaelangelesque spirit as the Temple of the Wingless Victory to that of Pheidias. But where Michael Angelo achieved a triumph of boldness, lesser natures were betrayed into bizarrerie; and this chapel of the Medici, in spite of its grandiose simplicity, proved a stumbling-block to subsequent architects by encouraging them to despise propriety and violate the laws of structure. The same may be said with even greater truth of the Laurentian Library and its staircase. The false windows, repeated pillars, and barefaced aiming at effect, that mark the insincerity of the *barocco* style, are found here almost for the first time.

What S. Peter's would have been, if Michael Angelo had lived to finish it, can be imagined from his plans and elevations still preserved. It must always remain a matter of profound regret that his project was so far altered as to sacrifice the effect of the dome from the piazza. This dome is Michael Angelo's supreme achievement as an architect. It not only preserves all that is majestic in the cupola of Brunelleschi; but it also avoids the defects of its avowed model, by securing the entrance of abundant light, and dilating the imagination with the sense of space to soar and float in. It is the dome that makes S. Peter's what it is—the adequate symbol of the Church in an age that had abandoned mediævalism and produced a new type of civility for the modern nations. On the connection between the building of S. Peter's and the Reformation I have touched already.<sup>36</sup> This mighty temple is the shrine of Catholicity, no longer cosmopolitan by right of spiritual empire, but secularised and limited to Latin races. At the same time it represents the spirit of a period when the Popes still led the world as intellectual chiefs. As the decree for its erection was the last act of the Papacy before the schism of the North had driven it into blind conflict

<sup>36</sup> See *Age of the Despots*, p. 220. See Gregorovius, *Geschichte der Stadt Rom*, vol. viii. p. 127, and the quotation there translated from Pallavicini's *History of the Council of Trent*.

with advancing culture, so S. Peter's remains the monument to after ages of a moment when the Roman Church, unterrified as yet by German rebels, dared to share the mundane impulse of the classical revival. She had forgotten the catacombs and ruthlessly destroyed the Basilica of Constantine. By rebuilding the mother church of Western Christianity upon a new plan, she broke with tradition; and if Rome has not ceased to be the Eternal City, if all ways are still leading to Rome, we may even hazard a conjecture that in the last days of their universal monarchy the Popes reared this fane to be the temple of a spirit alien to their own. It is at any rate certain that S. Peter's produces an impression less ecclesiastical, and less strictly Christian, than almost any of the elder and far humbler churches of Europe. Raised by proud and secular pontiffs in the heyday of renascent humanism, it seems to wait the time when the high priests of a religion no longer hostile to science or antagonistic to the inevitable force of progress will chaunt their hymns beneath its spacious dome.

The building of S. Peter's was so momentous in modern history, and so decisive for Italian architecture, that it may be permitted me to describe the vicissitudes through which the structure passed before reaching completion. Nicholas V., founder of the secular papacy and chief patron of the humanistic movement in Rome, had approved a scheme for thoroughly rebuilding and refortifying the pontifical city.<sup>37</sup> Part of this plan involved the reconstruction of S. Peter's. The old basilica was to be removed, and on its site was to rise a mighty church, shaped like a Latin cross, with a central dome and two high towers flanking the vestibule. Nicholas died before his project could be carried into effect. Beyond destroying the old temple of Probus and marking out foundations for the tribune of the new church, nothing had been accomplished;<sup>38</sup> nor did his successors until the reign of Julius think of continuing what he had begun. In 1506, on the 18th of April, Julius laid the first stone of S. Peter's according to the plans provided by Bramante. The basilica was designed in the shape of a Greek cross, surmounted by a colossal dome, and approached by a vestibule fronted with six columns. As in all the works of Bramante, simplicity and dignity distinguished this first scheme.<sup>39</sup> For eight years, until his death in 1514, Bramante laboured on the building. Julius, the most impatient of masters, urged him to work rapidly. In consequence of this haste, the substructures of the new church proved insecure, and

<sup>37</sup> See *Age of the Despots*, pp. 190-191. *Revival of Learning*, pp. 430-434. For his architectural designs see his *Life*, by Manetti, book ii., in Muratori, vol. iii. part ii.

<sup>38</sup> Gregorovius, vol. vii. p. 638.

<sup>39</sup> Besides the great work of Bonanni, *Templi Vaticani Historia*, I may refer my readers to the atlas volume of *Illustrations, Architectural and Pictorial, of the Genius of Michael Angelo Buonarroti*, compiled by Mr. Harford (Colnaghi, 1857). Plates 1 to 7 of that work are devoted to the plans of S. Peter's. Plate 4 is specially interesting, since it represents in one view the old basilica and the design of Bramante, together with those of Antonio di S. Gallo and Michael Angelo.

the huge piers raised to support the cupola were imperfect, while the venerable monuments contained in the old church were ruthlessly destroyed.<sup>40</sup> After Bramante's death Giuliano di S. Gallo, Fra Giocondo, and Raphael successively superintended the construction, each for a short period. Raphael, under Leo X., was appointed sole architect, and went so far as to alter the design of Bramante by substituting the Latin for the Greek cross. Upon his death, Baldassare Peruzzi continued the work, and supplied a series of new designs, restoring the ground-plan of the church to its original shape. He was succeeded in the reign of Paul III. by Antonio di S. Gallo, who once more reverted to the Latin cross, and proposed a novel form of cupola with flanking towers for the façade, of bizarre rather than beautiful proportions. After a short interregnum, during which Giulio Romano superintended the building and did nothing remarkable, Michael Angelo was called in 1535 to undertake the sole charge of the edifice. He declared that wherever subsequent architects had departed from Bramante's project, they had erred. 'It is impossible to deny that Bramante was as great in architecture as any man has been since the days of the ancients. When he first laid the plan of S. Peter's, he made it not a mass of confusion, but clear and simple, well lighted, and so thoroughly detached that it in no way interfered with any portion of the palace.'<sup>41</sup> Having thus pronounced himself in general for Bramante's scheme, Michael Angelo proceeded to develop it in accordance with his own canons of taste. He retained the Greek cross; but the dome, as he conceived it, and the details designed for each section of the building, differed essentially from what the earlier master would have sanctioned. Not the placid and pure taste of Bramante, but the masterful and fiery genius of Buonarroti, is responsible for the colossal scale of the subordinate parts and variously broken lineaments of the existing church. In spite of all changes of direction, the fabric of S. Peter's had been steadily advancing. Michael Angelo was, therefore, able to raise the central structure as far as the drum of the cupola before his death. His plans and models were carefully preserved, and a special papal ordinance decreed that henceforth there should be no deviation from the scheme he had laid down. Unhappily this rule was not observed. Under Pius V., Vignola and Piero Ligorio did indeed continue his tradition; under Gregory XIII., Sixtus V., and Clement VIII., Giacomo della Porta made no substantial alterations; and in 1590 Domenico Fontana finished the dome. But during the pontificate of Paul V., Carlo Maderno resumed the form of the Latin cross, and completed the nave and vestibule, as they now stand, upon this altered plan (1614). The consequence is what has been already noted—at a moderate distance from

<sup>40</sup> The subterranean vaults of S. Peter's contain mere fragments of tombs, some precious as historical records, some valuable as works of art, swept together pell-mell from the ruins of the old basilica.

<sup>41</sup> See the original letter to Ammanati, published from the Archivio Buonarroti, by Signor Milanesi, p. 535.

the church the dome is lost to view; it only takes its true position of predominance when seen from far. In the year 1626, S. Peter's was consecrated by Urban VIII., and the mighty work was finished. It remained for Bernini to add the colonnades of the piazza, no less picturesque in their effect than admirably fitted for the pageantry of world-important ceremonial. At the end of the eighteenth century it was reckoned that the church had cost but little less than fifty million scudi.

Michael Angelo forms the link between the second and third periods of the Renaissance. Among the architects of the latter age we have to reckon those who based their practice upon minute study of antique writers, and who, more than any of their predecessors, realised the long sought restitution of the classic style according to precise scholastic canons.<sup>42</sup> A new age had now begun for Italy. The glory and the grace of the Renaissance, its blooming time of beauty, and its spring-tide of young strength, were over. Strangers held the reins of power, and the Reformation had begun to make itself felt in the Northern provinces of Christendom. A colder and more formal spirit everywhere prevailed. The sources of invention in the art of painting were dried up. Scholarship had pined away into pedantic purism. Correct taste was coming to be prized more highly than originality of genius in literature. Nor did architecture fail to manifest the operation of this change. The greatest builder of the period was Andrea Palladio of Vicenza, who combined a more complete analytical knowledge of antiquity with a firmer adherence to rule and precedent than even the most imitative of his forerunners. It is useless to seek for decorative fancy, wealth of detail, or sallies of inventive genius in the Palladian style. All is cold and calculated in the many palaces and churches of this master which adorn both Venice and Vicenza; they make us feel that creative inspiration has been superseded by the labour of the calculating reason. One great public building of Palladio's, however—the Palazzo della Ragione at Vicenza—may be cited as, perhaps, the culminating point of pure Renaissance architecture. In its simple and heroical arcades, its solid columns, and noble open spaces, the strength of Rome is realised to the eyes of those who do not penetrate too far inside the building.<sup>43</sup> Here, and here only, the architectural problem of the epoch—how to bring the art of the ancients back to life and use again—was solved according to the spirit and the letter of the past. Palladio never equalled this, the earliest of all his many works.

In the first half of the sixteenth century the dictatorship of art had been already transferred from Florence and Rome to Lombardy.<sup>44</sup> The

<sup>42</sup> I am far from meaning that the earlier architects had not been guided by ancient authors. Alberti's *Treatise on the Art of Building* is a sufficient proof of their study of Vitruvius, and we know that Fabio Calvi translated that writer into Italian for Raphael. In the later Renaissance this study passed into purism.

<sup>43</sup> It must be confessed that this grandiose and picturesque structure is but a shell to mask an earlier Gothic edifice.

<sup>44</sup> Compare *Revival of Learning*, p. 564, for the same transference of power in literature from Central to Northern Italy at this time.



painters who carried on the great traditions were Venetian. Among the architects, Palladio was a native of Vicenza; Giacomo Barozzi, the author of the 'Treatise on the Orders,' took the name by which he is known from his birthplace, Vignola; Vincenzo Scamozzi was a fellow-townsmen of Palladio; Galeazzo Alessi, though born at Perugia, spent his life and developed his talents in Genoa; Andrea Formigine, the palace-builder, was a Bolognese; Bartolommeo Ammanni alone at Florence exercised the arts of sculpture and architecture in their old conjunction. Vignola, Palladio's elder by a few years, displays in his work even more of the scholastically frigid spirit of the late Renaissance, the narrowing of poetic impulse, and the dwindling of vitality, that sadden the second half of the sixteenth century in Italy. Scamozzi, labouring at Venice on works that Sansovino left unfinished, caught the genial spirit of the old Venetian style. Alessi, in like manner, at Genoa, felt the influences of a rich and splendour-loving aristocracy. His church of S. Maria di Carignano is one of the most successful ecclesiastical buildings of the late Renaissance, combining the principles of Bramante and Michael Angelo in close imitation of S. Peter's, and adhering in detail to the canons of the new taste.

These canons were based upon a close study of Vitruvius. Palladio, Vignola, and Scamozzi were no less ambitious as authors than as architects;<sup>45</sup> their minute analysis of antique treatises on the art of construction led to the formation of exact rules for the treatment of the five classic orders, the proportions of the chief parts used in building, and the correct method of designing theatres and palaces, church-fronts and cupolas. Thus architecture in its third Renaissance period passed into scholasticism.

The masters of this age, chiefly through the weight of their authority as writers, exercised a wider European influence than any of their predecessors. We English, for example, have given Palladio's name to the Italian style adopted by us in the seventeenth century. This selection of one man to represent an epoch was due partly no doubt to the prestige of Palladio's great buildings in the South, but more, I think to the facility with which his principles could be assimilated. Depending but little for effect upon the arts of decoration, his style was easily imitated in countries where painting and sculpture were unknown, and where a genius like Jean Goujon, the Sansovino of the French, has never been developed. To have rivalled the façade of the Certosa would have been impossible in London. Yet here Wren produced a cathedral worthy of comparison with the proudest of the late Italian edifices. Moreover, the principles of taste that governed Europe in the seventeenth century were such as found fitter architectural expression in this style than in the more genial and capricious manner of the earlier periods.

<sup>45</sup> Palladio's *Four Books of Architecture*, first published at Venice in 1570, and Vignola's *Treatise on the Five Orders*, have been translated into all the modern languages. Scamozzi projected, and partly finished, a comprehensive work on *Universal Architecture*, which was printed in 1685 at Venice.

After reviewing the rise and development of Renaissance architecture, it is almost irresistible to compare the process whereby the builders of this age learned to use dead forms for the expression of their thoughts, with the similar process by which the scholars accustomed themselves to Latin metres and the cadences of Ciceronian periods.<sup>46</sup> The object in each case was the same—to be as true to the antique as possible, and without actually sacrificing the independence of the modern mind, to impose upon it the limitations of a bygone civilisation. At first the enthusiasm for antiquity inspired architects and scholars alike with a desire to imitate *per saltum*, and many works of fervid sympathy and pure artistic intuition were produced. In course of time the laws both of language and construction were more accurately studied; invention was superseded by pedantry; after Poliziano and Alberti came Bembo and Palladio. In proportion as architects learned more about Vitruvius, and scholars narrowed their taste to Virgil, the style of both became more cramped and formal. It ceased at last to be possible to express modern ideas freely in the correct Latinity required by cultivated ears, while no room for originality, no scope for poetry of invention, remained in the elaborated method of the architects. Neo-Latin literature dwindled away to nothing, and Palladio was followed by the violent reactionaries of the *barocco* mannerism.

In one all-important respect this parallel breaks down. While the labours of the Latinists subserved the simple process of instruction, by purifying literary taste and familiarising the modern mind with the masterpieces of the classic authors, the architects created a new common style for Europe. With all its defects, it is not likely that the neo-Roman architecture, so profoundly studied by the Italians, and so anxiously refined by their chief masters, will ever wholly cease to be employed. In all cases where a grand and massive edifice, no less suited to purposes of practical utility than imposing by its splendour, is required, this style of building will be found the best. Changes of taste and fashion, local circumstances, and the personal proclivities of modern architects may determine the choice of one type rather than another among the numerous examples furnished by Italian masters. But it is not possible that either Greek or Gothic should permanently take the place assigned to neo-Roman architecture in the public buildings of European capitals.

<sup>46</sup> See *Revival of Learning*, chap. viii.

## CHAPTER III

### SCULPTURE

*Niccola Pisano—Obscurity of the sources for a History of Early Italian Sculpture—Vasari's Legend of Pisano—Deposition from the Cross at Lucca—Study of Nature and the Antique—Sarcophagus at Pisa—Pisan Pulpit—Niccola's School—Giovanni Pisano—Pulpit in S. Andrea at Pistoja—Fragments of his work at Pisa—Tomb of Benedict XI. at Perugia—Bas-reliefs at Orvieto—Andrea Pisano—Relation of Sculpture to Painting—Giotto—Subordination of Sculpture to Architecture in Italy—Pisano's Influence in Venice—Balduccio of Pisa—Orcagna—The Tabernacle of Orsammichele—The Gates of the Florentine Baptistry—Competition of Ghiberti, Brunelleschi, and Della Quercia—Comparison of Ghiberti's and Brunelleschi's Trial-pieces—Comparison of Ghiberti and Della Quercia—The Bas-reliefs of S. Petronio—Ghiberti's Education—His Pictorial Style in Bas-relief—His feeling for the Antique—Donatello—Early Visit to Rome—Christian subjects—Realistic Treatment—S. George and David—Judith—Equestrian Statue of Gattamelata—Influence of Donatello's Naturalism—Andrea Verocchio—His David—Statue of Colleoni—Alessandro Leopardi—Leonardo's Statue of Francesco Sforza—The Pollajuoli—Tombs of Sixtus IV. and Innocent VIII.—Luca della Robbia—His Treatment of Glazed Earthenware—Agostino di Duccio—The Oratory of S. Bernardino at Perugia—Antonio Rossellino—Matteo Civitali—Mino da Fiesole—Benedetto da Majano—Characteristics and Masterpieces of this Group—Sepulchral Monuments—Andrea Contucci's Tombs in S. Maria del Popolo—Desiderio da Settignano—Sculpture in S. Francesco at Rimini—Venetian Sculpture—Verona—Guido Mazzoni of Modena—Ceresa of Pavia—Colleoni Chapel at Bergamo—Sansovino at Venice—Pagan Sculpture—Michael Angelo's Scholars—Baccio Bandinelli—Bartolommeo Ammanni—Cellini—Gian Bologna—Survey of the History of Renaissance Sculpture.*

In the procession of the fine arts, sculpture always follows close upon the steps of architecture, and at first appears in some sense as her hand-maid. Mediæval Italy found her Pheidias in a great man of Pisan origin, born during the first decade of the thirteenth century. It was Niccola Pisano, architect and sculptor, who first breathed with the breath of genius life into the dead forms of plastic art. From him we date the dawn of the æsthetical Renaissance with the same certainty as from Petrarch that of humanism; for he determined the direction not only of sculpture but also of painting in Italy. To quote the language of Lord Lindsay's panegyric: 'Neither Dante nor Shakspeare can boast such extent and durability of influence; for whatever of highest excellence has been achieved in sculpture and painting, not in Italy only but throughout Europe, has been in obedience to the impulse he primarily gave, and in following up the principle which he first struck out.'<sup>1</sup> In truth, Niccola Pisano put the artist on the right track of

<sup>1</sup> *Sketches of the History of Christian Art*, vol. ii. p. 102.

combining the study of antiquity with the study of nature; and to him belongs the credit not merely of his own achievement, considerable as that may be, but also of the work of his immediate scholars and of all who learned from him to portray life. From Niccola Pisano onward to Michael Angelo and Cellini we trace one genealogy of sculptors, who, though they carried art beyond the sphere of his invention, looked back to him as their progenitor. The man who first emancipated sculpture from servile bondage, and opened a way for the attainment of true beauty, would by the Greeks have been honoured with a special cultus as the Hero Eponym of art. It remains for us after our own fashion to pay some such homage to Pisano.

The chief difficulty with which the student of early art and literature has to deal is the insufficiency of positive information. Instead of accurate dates and well-established facts he finds a legend, rich apparently in detail, but liable at every point to doubt, and subject to attack by plausible conjecture. In the absence of contemporary documents and other trustworthy sources of instruction, he is tempted to substitute his own hypotheses for tradition and to reconstruct the faulty outlines of forgotten history according to his own ideas of fitness. The Germans have been our masters in this species of destructive, dubitative, restorative criticism; and it is undoubtedly flattering to the historian's vanity to constitute himself a judge and arbiter in cases where tact and ingenuity may claim to sift the scattered fragment of confused narration. Yet to resist this temptation is in many cases a plain and simple duty. Tradition, when not positively disproved, should be allowed to have its full value; and a sounder historic sense is exercised in adopting its testimony with due caution, than in recklessly rejecting it and substituting guesses which the lack of knowledge renders unsubstantial. Tradition may err about dates, details, and names. It is just here that antiquarian research can render valuable help. But there are occasions when the perusal of documents and the exercise of what is called the higher criticism afford no surer basis for opinion. If in such cases a legend has been formed and recorded, the student will advance further toward comprehending the spirit of his subject by patiently considering what he knows to be in part perhaps a mythus, than by starting with the foregone conclusion that the legend must of necessity be worthless, and that his cunning will suffice to supply the missing clue.<sup>2</sup>

Thus much I have said by way of preface to what follows upon Niccola Pisano. Almost all we know about him is derived from a

<sup>2</sup> Since I wrote the paragraph above, I have chanced to read Mr. Ruskin's eloquent tirade against the modern sceptical school of critics in his 'Mornings in Florence,' *The Vaulted Book*, pp. 105, 106. With the spirit of it I thoroughly agree; feeling that, in the absence of solid evidence to the contrary, I would always rather accept sixteenth-century Italian tradition with Vasari, than reject it with German or English speculators of to-day. This does not mean that I wish to swear by Vasari, when he can be proved to have been wrong, but that I regard the present tendency to mistrust tradition, only because it is tradition, as in the highest sense uncritical.

couple of inscriptions, a few contracts, and his *Life* by Giorgio Vasari. It is clear that Vasari often wrote with carelessness, confusing dates and places, and taking no pains to verify the truth of his assertions. Much of Niccola's biography reads like a legend in his pages—the popular and oral tradition of a great man, whose panegyric it was more easy in the sixteenth century to adorn with rhetoric than to chronicle the details of his life with scrupulous fidelity. A well-founded conviction of Vasari's frequent inaccuracy has induced recent critics to call in question many hitherto accepted points about the nationality and training of Pisano. The discussion of their arguments I leave for the appendix, contenting myself at present with relating so much of Vasari's legend as cannot, I think, reasonably be rejected.<sup>3</sup>

Before the sculptor appeared in Niccola Pisano, he was already a famous architect; and it must always be remembered that he and his school subordinated the plastic to the constructive arts. It was not until the year 1233, or 1237, according to different modern calculations, that he executed his first masterpiece in sculpture.<sup>4</sup> This was a 'Deposition from the Cross,' in high relief, placed in a lunette over one of the side doors of S. Martino at Lucca. The noble forms of this group, the largeness of its style, the breadth of drapery and freedom of action it displays, but, above all, the unity of its design, proclaimed that a new era had begun for art. In order to appreciate the importance of this relief, it is only necessary to compare it with the processional treatment of similar subjects upon early Christian sarcophagi, where each figure stands up stiff and separate, nor can the controlling and combining artist's thought be traced in any effort after composition. Ever since the silver age of Hadrian, when a Bithynian slave by his beauty gave a final impulse to the Genius of Greece, sculpture had been gradually declining until nothing was left but a formal repetition of conventional outlines. The so-called Romanesque and Byzantine styles were but the dotage of second childhood, fumbling with the methods and materials of an irrecoverable past. It is true, indeed, that unknown mediæval carvers had shown an instinct for the beautiful as well as great fertility of grotesque invention. The façades of Lombard churches are covered with fanciful and sometimes forcibly dramatic groups of animals and men in combat; and contemporaneously with Niccola Pisano, many Gothic sculptors of the North were adorning the façades and porches of cathedrals with statuary unrivalled in one style of loveliness.<sup>5</sup> Yet the founder of a line of progressive artists had not arisen,

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix I., on the Pulpits of Pisa and Ravello.

<sup>4</sup> The date is extremely doubtful. Were we to trust internal evidence—the evidence of style and handling—we should be inclined to name this not the earliest but the latest and ripest of Pisano's works. It may be suggested in passing that the form of the lunette was favourable to the composition by forcing a gradation in the figures from the centre to either side. There is an engraving of this bas-relief in Ottley's *Italian School of Design*.

<sup>5</sup> Rheims Cathedral, for example, was begun in 1211. Upon its western portals is the loveliest of Northern Gothic sculpture.

and, except in Italy, the conditions were still wanting under which alone the plastic arts could attain to independence. A fresh start, at once conscious and scientific, was imperatively demanded. This new beginning sculpture took in the brain of Niccola Pisano, who returned from the by-paths of his predecessors to the free field of nature, and who learned precious lessons from the fragments of classical sculpture existing in his native town. As though to prove the essential dependence of the modern revival upon the recovery of antique culture, we find that his genius, in spite of its powerful originality and profoundly Christian bias, required the confirmation which could only be derived from Græco-Roman precedent. In the Campo Santo at Pisa may still be seen a sarcophagus representing the story of Hippolytus and Phædra, where once reposed the dust of Beatrice, the mother of the pious Countess Matilda of Tuscany. Studying the heroic nudities and noble attitudes of this bas-relief, Niccola rediscovered the right way of art—not by merely copying his model, but by divining the secret of the grand style. His work at Pisa contains abundant evidence that, while he could not wholly free himself from the defects of the later Romanesque manner, betrayed by his choice of short and square-set types, he nevertheless learned from the antique how to aim at beauty and freedom in his imitation of the living human form. A marble vase, sculptured with Indian Bacchus and his train of Mænads, gave him further help. From these grave or graceful classic forms, satisfied with their own goodliness, and void of inner symbolism, the Christian sculptor drank the inspiration of Renaissance art. In the 'Adoration of the Magi,' carved upon his Pisan pulpit, Madonna assumes the haughty pose of Theseus' wife; while the high priest, in the 'Circumcision,' displays the majesty of Dionysus leaning on the neck of Ampelus. Nor again is the naked vigour of Hippolytus without its echo in the figure of the young man—Hercules or Fortitude—upon a bracket of the same pulpit. These sculptures of Pisano are thus for us a symbol of what happened in the age of the Revival. The old world and the new shook hands; Christianity and Hellenism kissed each other. And yet they still remained antagonistic—fused externally by art, but severed in the consciousness that, during those strange years of dubious impulse, felt the might of both. Monks leaning from Pisano's pulpit preached the sinfulness of natural pleasure to women whose eyes were fixed on the adolescent beauty of an athlete. Not far off was the time when Filarete should cast in bronze the legends of Ganymede and Leda for the portals of S. Peter's, when Raphael should mingle a carnival of more than pagan sensuality with Bible subjects in Leo's Loggie, when Guglielmo della Porta should place the naked portrait of Giulia Bella in marble at the feet of Paul III. upon his sepulchre.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Antonio Filarete was commissioned, soon after 1431, by Eugenius IV., to make the great gates of S. Peter's. The decorative framework represents a multitude of living creatures—snails, snakes, lizards, mice, butterflies, and birds—half hidden in foliage, together with the best known among Greek myths, the Rape of Proserpine, Diana and

Niccola, meanwhile, did not follow his Roman models in any slavish spirit. They were neither numerous nor excellent enough to compel blind imitation or to paralyse inventive impulse. The thoughts to be expressed in marble by the first modern artist were not Greek. This in itself saved him from that tendency to idle reproduction which proved the ruin of the later neo-pagan sculptors. Yet the fragments of antique work he found within his reach, helped him to struggle after a higher quality of style, and established standards of successful treatment. For the rest, his choice of form and the proportions of his figures show that Niccola resorted to native Tuscan models. If nothing of his handiwork were left but the bas-relief of the 'Inferno' on the Pisan pulpit, the torsos of the men struggling with demons in that composition would prove this point. It remains his crowning merit to have first expressed the mythology of Christianity and the sentiment of the Middle Ages with the conscious aim of a real artist. And here it may be noticed that, a true Italian, he infused but little of intense or mystical emotion into his art. Niccola is more of a humanist, if this word may be applied to a sculptor, than some of his immediate successors. The hexagonal pulpit in the Baptistery of Pisa, the octagonal pulpit in the cathedral of Siena, the fountain in the market-place of Perugia, and the shrine of S. Dominic at Bologna, all of them designed and partly finished between 1260 and 1274 by Niccola and his scholars, display his mastery over the art of sculpture in the maturity of his genius. So highly did the Pisans prize their fellow-townsmen's pulpit that a law was passed and guardians were appointed for its preservation—much in the same way as the Zeus of Pheidias was consigned to the care of the Phaidruntai.

Niccola Pisano founded a school. His son Giovanni, and the numerous pupils employed upon the monuments just mentioned at Siena, Bologna, and Perugia, carried on the tradition of their master, and spread his style abroad through Italy. Giovanni Pisano, to whom we owe the Spina Chapel and the Campo Santo at Pisa, the façade of the Sienese Duomo, and the altar-shrine of S. Donato at Arezzo—four of the purest works of Gothic art in Italy—showed a very decided leaning to the vehement and mystic style of the Transalpine sculptors. We trace a dramatic intensity in Giovanni's work, not derived from his father, not caught from study of the antique, and curiously blended with the general characteristics of the Pisan school. In spite of the Gothic cusps introduced by Niccola into his pulpits, the spirit of his

Actæon, Europa and the Bull, the Labours of Hercules, &c. Such fables as the Fox and the Stork, the Fox and the Crow, and old stories like that of the death of Æschylus, are included in this medley. The monument of Paul III. is placed in the choir of S. Peter's. Giulia Bella was the mistress of Alexander VI., and a sister of the Farnese, who owed his cardinal's hat to her influence. To represent her as an allegory of Truth upon her brother's tomb might well pass for a grim satire. The Prudence opposite is said to be a portrait of the Pope's mother, Giovanna Gaetani. She resembles nothing more than a duenna of the type of Martha in Goethe's *Faust*. Here, again, the allegory would point a scathing sarcasm, if we did not remember the naïveté of the Renaissance.



work remained classical. The young Hercules holding the lion's cub in his right hand upon his shoulder, while with his left he tames the raging lioness, has the true Italian instinct for a return to Latin style. The same sympathy with the past is observable in the self-restraint and comparative coldness of the bas-reliefs at Pisa. The Junonian attitude of Madonna, the senatorial dignity of Simeon, the ponderous folding of the drapery, and the massive carriage of the neck throughout, denote an effort to revivify an antique manner. What, therefore, Niccola effected for sculpture was a classical revival in the very depth of the Middle Ages. The case is different with his son Giovanni. Profiting by the labours of his father, and following in his footsteps, he carried the new art into another region, and brought a genius of more picturesque and forcible temper into play. The value of this new direction given to sculpture for the arts of Italy, especially for painting, cannot be exaggerated. Without Giovanni's intervention, the achievement of Niccola might possibly have been as unproductive of immediate results as the Tuscan Romanesque, that mediæval effort after the Renaissance, was in architecture.<sup>7</sup>

The Gothic element, so cautiously adopted by Niccola, is used with sympathy and freedom by his son, whose masterpiece, the pulpit of S. Andrea at Pistoja, might be selected as the supreme triumph of Italian Gothic sculpture. The superiority of that complex and consummate work of plastic art over the pulpit of the Pisan Baptistery, in all the most important qualities of style and composition, can scarcely be called in question. Its only serious fault is an exaggeration of the height of the pillars in proportion to the size of the hexagon they support. Like the pulpits of the Baptistery, of the Duomo of Pisa, and of the Duomo of Siena, it combines bas-reliefs and detached statues, carved capitals, and sculptured lions, in a maze of marvellous invention; but it has no rival in the architectonic effect of harmony, and the masterly feeling for balanced masses it displays. The five subjects chosen by Giovanni for his bas-reliefs are the 'Nativity,' the 'Adoration of the Magi,' the 'Massacre of the Innocents,' the 'Crucifixion,' and the 'Last Judgment.' In the 'Nativity' our Lady is no longer the Roman matron of Niccola's conception, but a graceful mother, young in years, and bending with the weakness of childbirth. Her attitude, exquisite by the suggestion of tenderness and delicacy, is one that often reappears in the later work of the Pisan school—for example, in the rough *abbozzamento* in the Campo Santo at Pisa, above the north door of the Duomo at Lucca, and at Orvieto on the façade of the cathedral; but it has nowhere else been treated with the same sense of beauty. The 'Massacre of the Innocents,' compared with this relief, is a tragedy beside an idyll. Here the whole force of Giovanni's eminently dramatic genius comes into full play. Not only has he treated the usual incidents of mothers struggling with soldiers and bewailing their dead darlings, but he has also introduced a motive, which might well have been used by subsequent artists in

<sup>7</sup> See above, p. 611.

dealing with the same subjects. Herod is throned in one corner of the composition; before him stand a group of men and women, some imploring the tyrant for mercy, some defying him in impotent despair, and some invoking the curse of God upon his head. In the 'Adoration of the Magi,' again, Giovanni shows originality by the double action he has chosen to develop. On one side the kings are sleeping, while an angel comes to wake them, pointing out the star. On the other side they fall at the feet of the Madonna. It will be gathered even from these bare descriptions that Giovanni introduced a stir of life and movement, and felt his subjects with a poetic intensity, alien to the ideal of Græco-Roman sculpture. He effected a fusion between the grand style revived by Niccola and the romantic fervour of the modern imagination. It was in this way that the tradition handed down by him proved inestimably serviceable to the painters.

The bas-reliefs, however, by no means form the chief attraction of this pulpit. At each of its six angles stand saints, evangelists, and angels, whose symbolism it is not now so easy to decipher. The most beautiful groups are a company of angels blowing the judgment trumpets, and a winged youth standing above a winged lion and bull. These groups separate the several compartments of the bas-reliefs, and help to form the body of the pulpit. Beneath, on capitals of the supporting pillars, stand the Sibyls, each with her attendant genius, while prophets lean or crouch within the spandrels of the arches. Thus every portion of this master-work is crowded with figures—some detached, some executed in relief; and yet, amid so great a multitude, the eye is not confused; the total effect is nowhere dissipated. The whole seems governed by one constructive thought, projected as a perfect unity of composition.<sup>8</sup>

A later work of Giovanni Pisano was the pulpit executed for the cathedral of Pisa, now unfortunately broken up. An interesting fragment, one of the supporting columns of the octagon which formed the body of this structure, still exists in the museum of the Campo Santo. It is an allegorical statue of Pisa. The Ghibelline city is personified as a crowned woman, suckling children at her breast, and standing on a pedestal supported by the eagle of the Empire. She wears a girdle of rope seven times knotted, to betoken the rule of Pisa over seven subject islands. At the four corners of her throne stand the four human virtues, Prudence, Temperance, Justice, and Fortitude, distinguished less by beauty of shape than by determined energy of symbolism. Temperance is a naked woman, with hair twisted in the knots and curls of a Greek Aphrodite. Justice is old and wrinkled, clothed with massive drapery, and holding in her hand the scales. Throughout this group there is no attempt to realise forms pleasing to the eye; the sculptor has aimed at suggesting to the mind as many points of intellectual significance as

<sup>8</sup> Having said so much about this pulpit of S. Andrea, I am sorry that I cannot refer the English reader to any accessible representation of it. For its sake alone, if for no other purpose, Pistoja is well worth a visit.

possible. In spite of ugliness and hardness, the 'Allegory of Pisa' commands respect by vigour of conception, and rivets attention by force of execution.

A more popular and pleasing monument by Giovanni Pisano is the tomb of Benedict XI. in the church of S. Domenico at Perugia. The Pope, whose life was so obnoxious to the ambition of Philip le Bel that his timely death aroused suspicion of poison, lies asleep upon his marble bier with hands crossed in an attitude of peaceful expectation.<sup>9</sup> At his head and feet stand angels drawing back the curtains that would else have shrouded this last slumber of a good man from the eyes of the living.<sup>10</sup> A contrast is thus established between the repose of the dead and the ever-watchful activity of celestial ministers. Sleep so guarded, the sculptor seeks to tell us, must have glorious waking; and when those hands unfold upon the Resurrection morning, the hushed sympathy of the attendant angels will break into smiles and singing, as they lead the just man to the Lord he served in life.

Whether Giovanni Pisano had any share in the sculpture on the façade of the cathedral at Orvieto is not known for certain. Vasari asserts that Niccola and his pupils worked upon this series of bas-reliefs, setting forth the whole Biblical history and the cycle of Christian beliefs from the creation of the world to the last judgment. Yet we know that Niccola himself died at least twelve years before the foundation of the church in 1290; nor is there any proof that his immediate scholars were engaged upon the fabric. The Orvietan archives are singularly silent with regard to a monument of so large extent and vast importance, which must have taxed to the uttermost the resources of the ablest stone-carvers in Italy.<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile, what Vasari says is valuable only as a witness to the fame of Niccola Pisano. His manner, as continued and developed by his school, is unmistakable at Orvieto: but in the absence of direct information, we are left to conjecture the conditions under which this, the closing if not the crowning achievement of thirteenth-century sculpture, was produced.

When the great founder of Italian art visited Siena in 1266 for the completion of his pulpit in the Duomo, he found a guild of sculptors, or *taglia-pietri*, in that city, numbering some sixty members, and governed by a rector and three chamberlains. Instead of regarding Niccola with jealousy, these craftsmen only sought to learn his method. Accordingly it seems that a new impulse was given to sculpture in Siena; and famous workmen arose who combined this art with that of building. The chief of these was Lorenzo Maitani, who died in 1330, having designed and carried to completion the Duomo of Orvieto during his lifetime.<sup>12</sup> While engaged in this great undertaking, Maitani directed a

<sup>9</sup> It was long believed that he died of eating poisoned figs.

<sup>10</sup> See above, p. 617, note, for the original conception of this motive at Orvieto.

<sup>11</sup> See *Il Duomo di Orvieto, descritto ed illustrato per Lodovico Luzi*, pp. 330-339.

<sup>12</sup> See Luzi, pp. 317-328, and the first extant commission given in 1310 to Maitani, which follows, pp. 328-330.

body of architects, stone-carvers, bronze-founders, mosaists, and painters, gathered together into a guild from the chief cities of Tuscany. It cannot be proved that any of the Pisani, properly so called, were among their number. Lacking evidence to the contrary, we must give to Maitani, the master-spirit of the company, full credit for the sculpture carried out in obedience to his general plan. As the church of S. Francis at Assisi formed an epoch in the history of painting, by concentrating the genius of Giotto on a series of masterpieces, so the Duomo of Orvieto, by giving free scope to the school of Pisa, marked a point in the history of sculpture. It would be difficult to find elsewhere even separate works of greater force and beauty belonging to this, the first or architectural, period of Italian sculpture; and nowhere has the whole body of Christian belief been set forth with method more earnest and with vigour more sustained.<sup>13</sup> The subjects selected by these unknown craftsmen for illustration in marble, are in many instances the same as those afterwards painted in fresco by Michael Angelo and Raphael at Rome. Their treatment, for example, of the creation of Adam and Eve, adopted in all probability from still earlier and ruder workmen, after being refined by the improvements of successive generations, may still be observed in the triumphs of the Sistine Chapel and the Loggie.<sup>14</sup> It was the practice of Italian artists not to seek originality by diverging from the traditional modes of presentation, but to prove their mastery by rendering these as perfect and effective as the maturity of art could make them. For the Italians, as before them for the Greeks, plagiarism was a word unknown, in all cases where it was possible to improve upon the invention of less fortunate predecessors. The student of art may, therefore, now enjoy the pleasure of tracing sculptural or pictorial motives from their genesis in some rude fragment to their final development in the master-works of a Lionardo or a Raphael, where scientific grouping of figures, higher idealisation of style, the suggestion of freer movement, and more varied dramatic expression yield at last the full flower that the simple germ enfolded.

Among the most distinguished scholars of Niccola Pisano's tradition must now be mentioned Andrea da Pontadera, called Andrea Pisano,

<sup>13</sup> The whole series has been admirably engraved under the superintendence of Ludwig Grüner. Special attention may be directed to the groups of angels attendant on the Creator in His last day's work; to the 'Adoration of the Shepherds,' distinguished by tender and idyllic grace: and to the 'Adoration of the Magi,' marked no less by majesty. The dead breaking open the lids of their sarcophagi and rising to judgment are justly famous for spirited action.

<sup>14</sup> In Gothic sculpture of an early date the Bible narrative is literally represented. God draws Eve from the open side of sleeping Adam. On the façade of Orvieto this motive is less altered than refined. The wound in Adam's side is visible, but Eve is coming from behind his sleeping body in obedience to the beckoning hand of her Creator. Ghiberti in the bronze gate of the Florentine Baptistery still further develops the poetic beauty of the motive. Angels lift Eve in the air above Adam, in whose side there is now no open wound, and sustain her face to face with God, who calls her into life. Della Quercia, on the façade of S. Petronio, confines himself to the creative act, expressed by the raised hand of the Maker, and the answering attitude of Eve; and this conception receives final treatment from Michael Angelo in the frescoes of the Sistine.

who carried the manner of his master to Florence, and helped to fulfil the destiny of Italian sculpture by submitting it to the rising art of painting. Under the direction of Giotto he carved statues for the Campanile and the façade of S. Maria del Fiore; and in the first gate of the Baptistry, he bequeathed a model of bas-relief in bronze, which largely influenced the style of masters in the fifteenth century. To overpraise the simplicity and beauty of design, the purity of feeling, and the technical excellence of Andrea's bronze-work, would be difficult. Many students will always be found to prefer his self-restraint and delicacy to the more florid manner of Ghiberti.<sup>15</sup> What we chiefly observe in this gate is the control exercised by the sister art of painting over his mode of conception and treatment. If Giovanni Pisano developed the dramatic and emphatic qualities of Gothic sculpture, Andrea was attracted to its allegories; if Giovanni infused romantic vehemence of feeling into the frigid classicism of his father, Andrea diverged upon another track of picturesque delineation. A new sun had now arisen in the heavens of art. This was the sun of Giotto, whose genius, eminently pictorial, brought the Italians to a true sense of their æsthetical vocation, illuminating with its brightness the elder and more technically finished craft of the stone-carver. Sculpture, which in the school of Niccola Pisano had been subordinate to architecture, became a subspecies of painting in the hands of Andrea.

It was thus, as I have elsewhere stated, that the twofold doom of plastic art in Italy was accomplished. In order to embody the ideas of Christianity, art had to think more of expression than of pure form. Expression is the special sphere of painting; and therefore sculpture followed the lead of the sister art, as soon as painting was strong enough to give that lead, instead of remaining, as in Greece, the mistress of her own domain. On the deeper reasons for this subordination of sculpture to painting I have dwelt already, while showing that a large class of subjects, where physical qualities are comparatively indifferent and of no account, were forced upon the artist by Christianity.<sup>16</sup> Humility and charity may be found alike in blooming youth or in ascetic age; nor is it possible to characterize saints and martyrs by those corporeal characteristics which distinguish a runner from a boxer, or a chaste huntress from a voluptuous queen of love. Italian sculpture abandoned the presentation of the naked human body as useless. The emotions written on the face became of more importance than the modelling of the limbs, and recourse was had to allegorical symbols or emblematic attitudes for the interpretation of the artist's thought. Andrea Pisano's figure of Hope, raising hands and eyes toward an offered crown, seems but a repetition of the motive expressed by Giotto in the chiaroscuro frescoes of the Arena chapel.<sup>17</sup> Owing to similar causes, drapery, which

<sup>15</sup> *Le Tre Porte del Battistero di San Giovanni di Firenze, incise ed illustrate* (Firenze, 1821), contains outlines of all Andrea Pisano's and Ghiberti's work.

<sup>16</sup> See above, pp. 594-596.

<sup>17</sup> What Giotto himself was, as a designer for sculpture, is shown in the little reliefs upon the basement of his campanile.

in Greece had served to illustrate the structure or the movement of the body it clothed, was used by the Italian sculptors to conceal the limbs, and to enhance by flowing skirt or sinuous fold or agitated scarf some quality of the emotions. The result was that sculpture assumed a place subordinate to painting, and that the masterpieces of the early Italian carvers are chiefly bas-reliefs—pictures in bronze or marble.

In a like degree, though not for the same reason, sculpture in Italy remained subordinate to architecture, until such time as the neo-Hellenism of the full Renaissance produced a crowd of pseudo-classic statues, destined to take their places—not in churches, but in the courtyards of palaces and on the open squares of cities. The cause of this fact is not far to seek. In ancient Greece the temple had been erected for the god, and the statue dwelt within the cella like a master in his house. Christianity forbade an image of the living God; consequently the Church had another object than to roof the statue of a deity. It was the meeting-place of a congregation bent on worshipping Him who dwells not in houses made with hands, and whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain. The vast spaces and aerial arcades of mediæval architecture had their meaning in relation to the mystic apprehension of an unseen power. It followed of necessity that the carved work destined to decorate a Christian temple could never be the main feature of the building. It existed for the Church, and not the Church for it.<sup>18</sup>

Through Andrea Pisano the style of Niccola was extended to Venice. There is reason to believe that he instructed Filippo Calendario, to whom we should ascribe the sculptured corners of the Ducal Palace. Venice, however, invariably exercised her own controlling influence over the arts of aliens; so we find a larger, freer, richer, and more mundane treatment in these splendid carvings than in aught produced by Pisan workmen for their native towns of Tuscany.

Nino, the sculptor of the 'Madonna della Rosa,' the chief ornament of the Spina chapel, and Tommaso, both sons of Andrea da Pontadera, together with Giovanni Balduccio of Pisa, continued the traditions of the school founded by Niccola. Balduccio, invited by Azzo Visconti to Milan, carved the shrine of S. Peter Martyr in the church of S. Eustorgio, and impressed his style on Matteo da Campione, the sculptor of the shrine of S. Augustine at Pavia.<sup>19</sup> These facts, though briefly stated, are not without significance. Travellers who have visited the churches of Pavia and Milan, after studying the shrine, or *arca* as Italians call it, of S. Dominic at Bologna, must have noticed the ascendancy of

<sup>18</sup> What has previously been noted in the chapter upon architecture deserves repetition here—that the Italian style of building gave more scope to independent sculpture, owing to its preference for flat walls, and its rejection of multiplied niches, canopies, and so forth, than the Northern Gothic. Thus, however subordinated to architecture, sculpture in Italy still had more scope for self-assertion than in Germany or France.

<sup>19</sup> See Perkins, *Italian Sculptors*, p. 109, for a description of the Arca di S. Agostino, which he assigns to Matteo and Bonino da Campione. This shrine, now in the Duomo, was made for the sacristy of S. Pietro in Cielo d'Oro, where it stood until the year 1832.

Pisan style in these three Lombard towns, and have felt how widely Niccola's creative genius was exercised. Traces of the same influence may perhaps be observed in the tombs of the Scaligers at Verona.<sup>20</sup>

The most eminent pupil of Andrea Pisano, however, was a Florentine—the great Andrea Arcagnuolo di Cione, commonly known as Orcagna. This man, like the more illustrious Giotto, was one among the earliest of those comprehensive, many-sided natures produced by Florence for her everlasting glory. He studied the goldsmith's craft under his father, Cione, passing the years of his apprenticeship, like other Tuscan artists, in the technical details of an industry that then supplied the strictest method of design. With his brother, Bernardo, he practised painting. Like Giotto, he was no mean poet;<sup>21</sup> and like all the higher craftsmen of his age, he was an architect. Though the church of Orsammichele owes its present form to Taddeo Gaddi, Orcagna, as *capo maestro* after Gaddi's death, completed the structure; and though the Loggia de' Lanzi, long ascribed to him by writers upon architecture, is now known to be the work of Benci di Cione, yet Orcagna's Loggia del Bigallo, more modest but not less beautiful, prepared the way for its construction. Of his genius as a painter, proved by the frescoes in the Strozzi chapel, I shall have to speak hereafter. As a sculptor he is best known through the tabernacle of Orsammichele, built to enshrine the picture of the Madonna by Ugolino da Siena.<sup>22</sup>

In this monument Orcagna employed carved bas-reliefs and statuettes, intaglios and mosaics, incrustations of agates, enamels, and gilded glass patterns, with a sense of harmony so refined, and a mastery over each kind of workmanship so perfect, that the whole tabernacle is an epitome of the minor arts of mediæval Italy. The subordination of sculpture to architectural effect is noticeable; and the Giottesque influence appears even more strongly here than in the gate of Andrea Pisano. This influence Orcagna received indirectly through his master in stone carving; it formed, indeed, the motive force of figurative art during his lifetime. The subjects of the 'Annunciation,' the 'Nativity,' the 'Marriage of the Virgin,' and the 'Adoration of the Three Kings,' framed in octagonal mouldings at the base of the tabernacle, illustrate the domination of a spirit distinct both from the neo-Romanism of Niccola and the Gothicism of Giovanni Pisano. That spirit is Florentine in a general sense, and specifically Giottesque. Charity, again, with a flaming heart in her hand, crowned with a flaming brazier, and suckling a child, is Giottesque not only in allegorical conception but also in choice of type and treatment of drapery.

While admiring the tabernacle of Orsammichele, we are reminded that Orcagna was a goldsmith to begin with, and a painter. Sculpture

<sup>20</sup> Bonino da Campione, the Milanese, who may have had a hand in the Arca di S. Agostino, carved the tomb of Can Signorio. That of Mastino II. was executed by another Milanese, Perino.

<sup>21</sup> See Trucchi, *Poesie Italiane inedite*, vol. ii.

<sup>22</sup> See the Illustrated work, *Il Tabernacolo della Madonna d'Or sammichele*, Firenze, 1851.



he practised as an accessory. What the artists of Florence gained in delicacy of execution, accuracy of modelling, and precision of design by their apprenticeship to the goldsmith's trade, was hardly perhaps sufficient to compensate for loss of training in a larger style. It was difficult, we fancy, for men so educated to conceive the higher purposes of sculpture. Contented with elaborate workmanship and beauty of detail, they failed to attain to such independence of treatment as may be reached by sculptors who do not carry to their work the preconceptions of a narrower handicraft. Thus even Orcagna's masterpiece may strike us not as the plaything of a Pheidian genius condescending for once to 'breathe through silver,' but of a consummate goldsmith taxing the resources of his craft to form a monumental jewel.<sup>23</sup>

The façade of Orvieto was the final achievement of the first or architectural period of Italian sculpture. Giotto, Andrea Pisano, and Orcagna, formed the transition to the second period. To find one characteristic title for the style of the fifteenth century is not easy, since it was marked by many distinct peculiarities. If, however, we choose to call it pictorial, we shall sufficiently mark the quality of some eminent masters, and keep in view the supremacy of painting at this epoch. A great public enterprise at Florence brings together in honourable rivalry the chief craftsmen of the new age, and marks the advent of the Renaissance. When the Signory, in concert with the Arte de' Mercanti, decided to complete the bronze gates of the Baptistery in the first year of the fifteenth century, they issued a manifesto inviting the sculptors of Italy to prepare designs for competition. Their call was answered by Giacomo della Quercia of Siena, by Filippo Brunelleschi and Lorenzo di Cino Ghiberti of Florence, and by two other Tuscan artists of less note. The young Donatello, aged sixteen, is said to have been consulted as to the rival merits of the proofs submitted to the judges. Thus the four great masters of Tuscan art in its prime met before the Florentine Baptistery.<sup>24</sup> Giacomo della Quercia was excluded from the competition at an early stage; but the umpires wavered long between Ghiberti and Brunelleschi, until the latter, with notable generosity, feeling the superiority of his rival, and conscious perhaps that his own laurels were to be gathered in the field of architecture, withdrew his claim. In 1403, Ghiberti received the commission for the first of the two remaining gates. He afterwards obtained the second; and as they were not finished until 1452, the better part of his lifetime was spent upon them. He received in all a sum of 30,798 golden florins for his labour and the cost of the material employed.

The trial-pieces prepared by Brunelleschi and Ghiberti are now preserved in the Bargello.<sup>25</sup> Their subject is the 'Sacrifice of Isaac;' and a comparison of the two leaves no doubt of Ghiberti's superiority. The

<sup>23</sup> The weighty chapter in Alberti's *Treatise on Painting*, lib. iii. cap. 5, might be used to support this paragraph.

<sup>24</sup> Quercia, born 1374; Ghiberti, 1378; Brunelleschi, 1379; Donatello, 1386.

<sup>25</sup> They are engraved in the work cited above, *Le Tre Porte, seconda Porta*, Tavole i. ii.

faults of Brunelleschi's model are want of repose and absence of composition. Abraham rushes in a frenzy of murderous agitation at his son, who writhes beneath the knife already at his throat. The angel swoops from heaven with extended arms, reaching forth one hand to show the ram to Abraham, and clasping the patriarch's wrist with the other. The ram meanwhile is scratching his nose with his near hind leg; one of the servants is taking a thorn from his foot, while the other fills a cup from the stream at which the ass is drinking. Thus each figure has a separate uneasy action. Those critics who contend that the unrest of sixteenth-century sculpture was due to changes in artistic and religious feeling wrought by the Renaissance, would do well to examine this plate, and see how much account must be taken of the artist's temperament in forming their opinion. Brunelleschi adhered to the style and taste of the fifteenth century at its commencement; but the too fervid quality of his character impaired his work as a sculptor. Ghiberti, on the other hand, translated the calm of his harmonious nature into his composition. The angel leans from heaven and points to the ram, which is seated quietly and out of sight of the main actors. Isaac kneels in the attitude of a submissive victim, though his head is turned aside, as if attracted by the rush of pinions through the air; while Abraham has but just lifted his hand, and the sacrifice is only suggested as a possibility by the naked knife. The two servants are grouped below in conversation, one on each side of the browsing ass. This power of telling a story plainly, but without dramatic vehemence; of eliminating the painful details of the subject, and combining its chief motives into one agreeable whole, gave peculiar charm to Ghiberti's manner. It marked him as an artist distinguished by good taste.

How Della Quercia treated the 'Sacrifice of Isaac' we do not know. His bas-reliefs upon the façade of S. Petronio at Bologna, and round the font of S. John's Chapel in the cathedral of Siena, enable us, however, to compare his style with that of Ghiberti in the handling of a subject common to both, the 'Creation of Eve.'<sup>26</sup> There is no doubt but that Della Quercia was a formidable rival. Had the gates of the Baptistery been entrusted to his execution, we might have possessed a masterpiece of more heroic style. While smoothness and an almost voluptuous suavity of outline distinguish Ghiberti's naked Eve, gliding upheld by angels from the side of Adam at her Maker's bidding, Della Quercia's group, by the concentration of robust and rugged power, anticipates the style of Michael Angelo. Ghiberti treats the subject pic-

<sup>26</sup> The bas-reliefs of S. Petronio were executed between 1425 and 1435. Those of the font in the chapel of S. John (not the lower church of S. John), at Siena, are ascribed to Quercia, and are in his manner; but when they were finished I do not know. They set forth six subjects from the story of Adam and Eve, with a compartment devoted to Hercules killing the Centaur Nessus, and another to Samson or Hercules and the Lion. The choice of subjects, affording scope for treatment of the nude, is characteristic; so is the energy of handling, though rude in detail. It may be worth while to notice here a similar series of reliefs upon the façade of the Colleoni Chapel at Bergamo, representing scenes from the story of Adam in conjunction with the labours of Hercules.

torially, placing his figures in a landscape, and lavishing attendant angels. Della Quercia, in obedience to the stricter laws of sculpture, restrains his composition to the three chief persons, and brings them into close connection. While Adam reclines asleep in a beautiful and highly studied attitude, Eve has just stepped forth behind him, and God stands robed in massive drapery, raising His hand as though to draw her into life. There is, perhaps, an excess of dramatic action in the lifted right leg of Eve, and too much of pantomimic language in the expressive hands of Eve and her Creator. The robe, again, in its voluminous and snaky coils, and the triangular nimbus of the Deity, convey an effect of heaviness rather than of majesty. Yet we feel, while studying this composition, that it is a noble and original attempt, falling but little short of supreme accomplishment. Without this antecedent sketch, Michael Angelo might not have matured the most complete of all his designs in the Sistine Chapel. The similarity between Della Quercia's bas-relief and Buonarroti's fresco of Eve is incontestable. The young Florentine, while an exile in Bologna, and engaged upon the shrine of S. Dominic, must have spent hours of study before the sculptures of S. Petronio; so that this seed of Della Quercia's sowing bore after many years the fruit of world-renowned achievement in Rome.

Two other memorable works of Della Quercia must be parenthetically mentioned. These are the Fonte Gaja on the public square of Siena, now unhappily restored, and the portrait of Ilaria del Caretto on her tomb in the cathedral of Lucca. The latter has long been dear to English students of Italian art through words inimitable for their strength of sympathetic criticism.<sup>27</sup>

Ghiberti was brought up as a goldsmith by his stepfather, and it is said that while a youth he spent much of his leisure in modelling portraits and casting imitations of antique gems and coins for his friends. At the same time he practised painting. We find him employed in decorating a palace at Rimini for Carlo Malatesta, when his stepfather recalled him to Florence, in order that he might compete for the gate of the Baptistery. It is probable that from this early training Ghiberti derived the delicacy of style and smoothness of execution that are reckoned among the chief merits of his work. He also developed a manner more pictorial than sculpturesque, which justifies our calling him a painter in bronze. When Sir Joshua Reynolds remarked, 'Ghiberti's landscape and buildings occupied so large a portion of the compartments, that the figures remained but secondary objects,'<sup>28</sup> his criticism might fairly have been taxed with some injustice even to the second of the two gates. Yet, though exaggerated in severity, his words convey a truth important for the understanding of this period of Italian art.

The first gate may be cited as the supreme achievement of bronze-casting in the Tuscan prime. In the second, by the introduction of

<sup>27</sup> Ruskin's *Modern Painters*, vol. ii. chap. vii, Repose.

<sup>28</sup> See Flaxman's *Lectures on Sculpture*, p. 310.

elaborate landscapes and the massing together of figures arranged in multitudes at three and sometimes four distances, Ghiberti overstepped the limits that separate sculpture from painting. Having learned perspective from Brunelleschi, he was eager to apply this new science to his own craft, not discerning that it has no place in noble bas-relief. He therefore abandoned the classical and the early Tuscan tradition, whereby reliefs, whether high or low, are strictly restrained to figures arranged in line or grouped together without accessories. Instead of painting frescoes, he set himself to model in bronze whole compositions that might have been expressed with propriety in colour. The point of Sir Joshua's criticism, therefore, is that Ghiberti's practice of distributing figures on a small scale in spacious landscape framework was at variance with the severity of sculptural treatment. The pernicious effect of his example may be traced in much Florentine work of the mid-Renaissance period which passed for supremely clever when it was produced. What the unique genius of Ghiberti made not merely pardonable but even admirable, became under other hands no less repulsive than the transference of pictorial effects to painted glass.<sup>29</sup>

That Ghiberti was not a great sculptor of statues is proved by his work at Orsammichele. He was no architect, as we know from his incompetence to do more than impede Brunelleschi in the building of the dome. He came into the world to create a new and inimitable style of hybrid beauty in those gates of Paradise. His susceptibility to the first influences of the classical revival deserves notice here, since it shows to what an extent a devotee of Greek art in the fifteenth century could worship the relics of antiquity without passing over into imitation. When the 'Hermaphrodite' was discovered in the vineyard of S. Celso, Ghiberti's admiration found vent in exclamations like the following: 'No tongue could describe the learning and art displayed in it, or do justice to its masterly style.' Another antique, found near Florence, must, he conjectures, have been hidden out of harm's way by 'some gentle spirit in the early days of Christianity.' 'The touch only,' he adds, 'can discover its beauties, which escape the sense of sight in any light.'<sup>30</sup> It would be impossible to express a reverential love of ancient art more tenderly than is done in these sentences. So intense was Ghiberti's passion for the Greeks, that he rejected Christian chronology and reckoned by Olympiads—a system that has thrown obscurity over his otherwise precious notes of Tuscan artists. In spite of this devotion, he never appears to have set himself consciously to reproduce the style of Greek sculpture, or to have set forth Hellenic ideas. He remained unaffectedly natural, and in a true sense Christian. The paganism of the Renaissance is a phrase with no more meaning for him than for that still more delicate Florentine spirit, Luca della

<sup>29</sup> This criticism of the 'Gate of Paradise' sounds even to the writer of it profane, and demands a palinode. Who, indeed, can affirm that he would wish the floating figure of Eve, or the three angels at Abraham's tent-door, other than they are?

<sup>30</sup> See the *Commentaries of Ghiberti*, printed in vol. i. of Vasari (Lemonnier, 1846).

Robbia; and if his works are classical, they are so only in Goethe's sense, when he pronounced, 'the point is for a work to be thoroughly good, and then it is sure to be classical.'

One great advantage of the early days of the Renaissance over the latter was this, that pseudo-paganism and pedantry had not as yet distorted the judgment or misdirected the aims of artists. Contact with the antique world served only to stimulate original endeavour, by leading the student back to the fountain of all excellence in nature, and by exhibiting types of perfection in technical processes. To ape the sculptors of Antinous, or to bring to life again the gods who died with Pan, was not yet longed for. Of the impunity with which a sculptor in that period could submit his genius to the service and the study of ancient art without sacrificing individuality, Donatello furnishes a still more illustrious example than Ghiberti. Early in his youth Donatello journeyed with Brunelleschi to Rome, in order to acquaint himself with the monuments then extant. How thoroughly he comprehended the classic spirit is proved by the bronze patera wrought for his patron Ruberto Martelli, and by the frieze of the triumphant Bacchus.<sup>31</sup> Yet the great achievements of his genius were Christian in their sentiment and realistic in their style. The bronze 'Magdalen' of the Florentine Baptistery and the bronze 'Baptist' of the Duomo at Siena<sup>32</sup> are executed with an unrelenting materialism, not alien indeed to the sincerity of classic art, but divergent from antique tradition, inasmuch as the ideas of repentant and prophetic asceticism had no place in Greek mythology.

Donatello, with the uncompromising candour of an artist bent on marking character, felt that he was bound to seize the very pith and kernel of his subject. If a Magdalen were demanded of him, he would not condescend to model a Venus and then place a book and skull upon a rock beside her; nor did he imagine that the bloom and beauty of a laughing Faun were fitting attributes for the preacher of repentance. It remained for later artists, intoxicated with antique loveliness and corroded with worldly scepticism, to reproduce the outward semblance of Greek deities under the pretence of setting forth the myths of Christianity. Such compromise had not occurred to Donatello. The motive of his art was clearly apprehended, his method was sincere; certain phases of profound emotion had to be represented with the physical characteristics proper to them. The result, ugly and painful as it may sometimes be, was really more concordant with the spirit of Greek method than Lionardo's 'John' or Correggio's 'Magdalen.' That is to say, it was straightforward and truthful; whereas the strange caprices of the later Renaissance too often betrayed a double mind, disloyal alike to paganism and to Christianity, in their effort to combine divergent forces. It may still be argued that such conceptions as sorrow for sin and mortification of the flesh, unflinchingly portrayed by haggard

<sup>31</sup> The patera is at South Kensington, the frieze at Florence.

<sup>32</sup> As also the wooden Baptist in the Frari at Venice.

gauntness in the saints of Donatello, are unfit for sculpturesque expression.

A more felicitous embodiment of modern feeling was achieved by Donatello in 'S. George' and 'David.' The former is a marble statue placed upon the north wall of Orsammichele; the latter is a bronze, cast for Cosimo de' Medici, and now exhibited in the Bargello.<sup>33</sup> Without striving to idealise his models, the sculptor has expressed in both the Christian conception of heroism, fearless in the face of danger, and sustained by faith. The naked beauty of the boy David and the mailed manhood of S. George are raised to a spiritual region by the type of feature and the pose of body selected to interpret their animating impulse. These are no mere portraits of wrestlers, such as peopled the groves of Altis at Olympia, no ideals of physical strength translated into brass and marble, like the 'Hercules' of Naples or the Vatican. The one is a Christian soldier ready to engage Apollyon in battle to the death; the other the boy-hero of a marvellous romance. The body in both is but the shrine of an indwelling soul, the instrument and agent of a faith-directed will; and the crown of their conflict is no wreath of laurel or of parsley. In other words, the value of S. George and David to the sculptor lay not in their strength and youthful beauty—though he has endowed them with these excellent gifts—so much as in their significance for the eternal struggle of the soul with evil. The same power of expressing Christian sentiment in a form of perfect beauty, transcending the Greek type by profounder suggestion of feeling, is illustrated in the well-known low-relief of an angel's head in profile, technically one of Donatello's most masterly productions.<sup>34</sup>

It is no part of my present purpose to enumerate the many works of Donatello in marble and bronze; yet some allusion to their number and variety is necessary in order to show how widely his influence was diffused through Italy. In the monuments of Pope John XXIII., of Cardinal Brancacci, and of Bartolommeo Aragazzi, he subordinated his genius to the treatment of sepulchral and biographical subjects according to time-honoured Tuscan usage. They were severally placed in Florence, Naples, and Montepulciano. For the cathedral of Prato he executed bas-reliefs of dancing boys; a similar series, intended for the balustrades of the organ in S. Maria del Fiore, is now preserved in the Bargello museum. The exultation of movement has never been expressed in stone with more fidelity to the strict rules of plastic art. For his friend and patron, Cosimo de' Medici, he cast in bronze the group of 'Judith and Holofernes'—a work that illustrates the clumsiness of realistic treatment, and deserves to be remembered chiefly for its strange fortunes. When the Medici fled from Florence in 1494, their palace was sacked; the new republic took possession of Donatello's

<sup>33</sup> There is another 'David,' by Donatello, in marble; also in the Bargello, scarcely less stiff and ugly than the 'Baptist.'

<sup>34</sup> The cast was published by the Arundel Society. The original belongs to Lord Elcho.

'Judith,' and placed it on a pedestal before the gate of the Palazzo Vecchio, with this inscription, ominous to would-be despots: *Exemplum salutis publicæ cives posuere. MCCCCXCV*. It now stands near Cellini's 'Perseus' under the Loggia de' Lanzi. For the pulpits of S. Lorenzo, Donatello made designs of intricate bronze bas-reliefs, which were afterwards completed by his pupil Bertoldo. These, though better known to travellers, are less excellent than the reliefs in bronze wrought by Donatello's own hand for the church of S. Anthony at Padua.<sup>35</sup> To that city he was called in 1451, in order that he might model the equestrian statue of Gattamelata. It still stands on the Piazza, a masterpiece of scientific bronze-founding, the first great portrait of a general on horseback since the days of Rome.<sup>36</sup> At Padua, in the hall of the Palazzo della Ragione, is also preserved the wooden horse, which is said to have been constructed by the sculptor for the noble house of Capodilista. These two examples of equestrian modelling marked an epoch in Italian statuary.

When Donato di Nicolo di Betto Bardi, called Donatello because men loved his sweet and cheerful temper, died in 1466 at the age of eighty, the brightest light of Italian sculpture in its most promising period was extinguished. Donatello's influence, felt far and wide through Italy, was of inestimable value in correcting the false direction toward pictorial sculpture which Ghiberti, had he flourished alone at Florence, might have given to the art. His style was always eminently masculine. However tastes may differ about the positive merits of his several works, there can be no doubt that the principles of sincerity, truth to nature, and technical accuracy they illustrate, were all-important in an age that lent itself too readily to the caprices of the fancy and the puerilities of florid taste. To regret that Donatello lacked Ghiberti's exquisite sense of beauty, is tantamount to wishing that two of the greatest artists of the world had made one man between them.

Donatello did not, in the strict sense of the term, found a school.<sup>37</sup> Andrea Verocchio, goldsmith, painter, and worker in bronze, was the most distinguished of his pupils. To all the arts he practised, Verocchio applied limited powers, a meagre manner, and a prosaic mind. Yet few men have exercised at a very critical moment a more decided influence. The mere fact that he numbered Lionardo da Vinci, Lorenzo di Credi, and Pietro Perugino among his scholars, proves the esteem of his contemporaries; and when we have observed that the type of face selected by Lionardo and transmitted to his followers, appears also in the pictures of Lorenzo di Credi and is first found in the 'David'

<sup>35</sup> It has been suggested, with good show of reason, that Mantegna was largely indebted to these bas-reliefs for his lofty style.

<sup>36</sup> This omits the statues of the Scaligers: but no mediæval work aimed at equal animation. The antique bronze horses at Venice and the statue of Marcus Aurelius must have been in Donatello's mind.

<sup>37</sup> The sculptor of a beautiful tomb erected for the Countess of Montorio and her infant daughter in the church of S. Bernardino at Aquila was probably Andrea dell' Aquila, a pupil of Donatello. See Perkins's *Italian Sculptors*, pp. 46, 47.



of Verocchio, we have a right to affirm that the master of these men was an artist of creative genius as well as a careful workman. Florence still points with pride to the 'Incredulity of Thomas' on the eastern wall of Orsammichele, to the 'Boy and Dolphin' in the court of the Palazzo Vecchio, and to the 'David' of this sculptor: but the first is spoiled by heaviness and angularity of drapery; the second, though fanciful and marked by fluttering movement, is but a caprice; the third outdoes the hardest work of Donatello by its realism. Verocchio's 'David,' a lad of some seventeen years, has the lean, veined arms of a stone-hewer or gold-beater. As a faithful portrait of the first Florentine prentice who came to hand, this statue might have merit but for the awkward cuirass and kilt that partly drape the figure.

The name of Verocchio is best known to the world through the equestrian statue of Bartolommeo Colleoni. When this great Condottiere, the last surviving general trained by Braccio da Montone, died in 1475, he bequeathed a large portion of his wealth to Venice, on condition that his statue on horseback should be erected in the Piazza di S. Marco. Colleoni, having long held the baton of the Republic, desired that after death his portrait, in his habit as he lived, should continue to look down on the scene of his old splendour. By an ingenious quibble the Senators adhered to the letter of his will without infringing a law that forbade them to charge the square of S. Mark with monuments. They ruled that the piazza in front of the Scuola di S. Marco, better known as the Campo di S. Zanipolo, might be chosen as the site of Colleoni's statue, and to Andrea Verocchio was given the commission for its erection.

Andrea died in 1488 before the model for the horse was finished. The work was completed, and the pedestal was supplied by Alessandro Leopardi. To Verocchio, profiting by the example of Donatello's 'Gattamelata,' must be assigned the general conception of this statue; but the breath of life that animates both horse and rider, the richness of detail that enhances the massive grandeur of the group, and the fiery spirit of its style of execution were due to the Venetian genius of Leopardi. Verocchio alone produced nothing so truly magnificent. This joint creation of Florentine science and Venetian fervour is one of the most precious monuments of the Renaissance. From it we learn what the men who fought the bloodless battles of the commonwealths, and who aspired to principality, were like. 'He was tall,' writes a biographer of Colleoni,<sup>38</sup> 'of erect and well-knit figure, and of well-proportioned limbs. His complexion tended rather to brown, marked withal by bright and sanguine flesh-tints. He had black eyes; their brilliancy was vivid, their gaze terrible and penetrating. In the outline of his nose and in all his features he displayed a manly nobleness combined with goodness and prudence.' Better phrases cannot be chosen to describe his statue.

<sup>38</sup> *Istoria della Vita e Fatti dell' eccellentissimo Capitano di guerra Bartolommeo Colleoni*, scritta per Pietro Spino. Republished, 1859.

While admiring this masterpiece and dwelling on its royal style, we are led to deplore most bitterly the loss of the third equestrian statue of the Renaissance. Nothing now remains but a few technical studies made by Lionardo da Vinci for his portrait of Francesco Sforza. The two elaborate models he constructed and the majority of his minute designs have been destroyed. He intended, we are told, to represent the first Duke of the Sforza dynasty on his charger, trampling the body of a prostrate and just conquered enemy. Rubens' transcript from the 'Battle of the Standard,' enables us to comprehend to some extent how Lionardo might have treated this motive. The severe and cautious style of Donatello, after gaining freedom and fervour from Leopardi, was adapted to the ideal presentation of dramatic passion by Lionardo. Thus Gattamelata, Colleoni, and Francesco Sforza would, through their statues, have marked three distinct phases in the growth of art. The final effort of Italian sculpture to express human activity in the person of a mounted warrior has perished. In this sphere we possess nothing which, like the tombs of S. Lorenzo in relation to sepulchral statuary, completes a series of development.

If Donatello founded no school, this was far more the case with Ghiberti. His supposed pupil, Antonio del Pollajuolo, showed no sign of Ghiberti's influence, but struck out for himself a style distinguished by almost brutal energy and bizarre realism—characteristics the very opposite to those of his master. If the bronze relief of the 'Crucifixion' in the Bargello be really Pollajuolo's, we may even trace a leaning to Verocchio in his manner. The emphatic passion of the women recalls the group of mourners round the deathbed of Selvaggia Tornabuoni in Verocchio's celebrated bas-relief. Pollajuolo, like so many Florentine artists, was a goldsmith, a painter, and a worker in niello, before he took to sculpture. As a goldsmith he is said to have surpassed all his contemporaries, and his mastery over this art influenced his style in general. What we chiefly notice, however, in his choice of subjects is a frenzy of murderous enthusiasm, a grimness of imagination, rare among Italian artists. The picture in the Uffizzi of 'Hercules and Antæus' and the well-known engraving of naked men fighting a series of savage duels in a wood, might be chosen as emphatic illustrations of his favourite motives. The fiercest emotions of the Renaissance find expression in the clenched teeth, strained muscles, knotted brows, and tense nerves, depicted by Pollajuolo with eccentric energy. We seem to be assisting at some of those combats a *steccato chiuso* wherein Sixtus IV. delighted, or to have before our eyes a fray between Crocensi and Vallensi in the streets of Rome.<sup>39</sup> The same remarks apply to the terracotta relief by Pollajuolo in the South Kensington Museum. This piece displays the struggles of twelve naked men, divided into six pairs of combatants. Two of the couples hold short chains with the left hand, and seek to stab each other with the right. In the case of another two couples the fight is over, and the victor is insulting his fallen foe. In

<sup>39</sup> See *Age of the Despots*, p. 199, note 18.

each of the remaining pairs one gladiator is on the point of yielding to his adversary. There are thus three several moments of duel to the death, each illustrated by two couples. The mathematical distribution of these dreadful groups gives an effect of frozen passion; while the vigorous workmanship displays not only an enthusiasm for muscular anatomy, but a real sympathy with blood-fury in the artist.

There was, therefore, a certain propriety in the choice of Pollajuolo to cast the sepulchre of Sixtus IV. in bronze at Rome. The best judges complain, not without reason, that the allegories surrounding this tomb are exaggerated and affected in style; yet the dead Pope, stretched in pomp upon his bier, commands more than merely historical interest; while the figures, seated as guardians round the old man, terrible in death, communicate an impression of monumental majesty. Criticised in detail, each separate figure may be faulty. The composition, as a whole, is picturesque and grandiose. The same can scarcely be said about the tomb of Innocent VIII., erected by Antonio and his brother Piero del Pollajuolo. While it perpetuates the memory of an uninteresting Pontiff, it has but little, as a work of art, to recommend it. The Pollajuoli were not great sculptors. In the history of Italian art they deserve a place, because of the vivid personality impressed upon some portions of their work. Few draughtsmen carried the study of muscular anatomy so far as Antonio.<sup>40</sup>

Luca della Robbia, whose life embraced the first eighty years of the fifteenth century, offers in many important respects a contrast to his contemporaries Ghiberti and Donatello, and still more to their immediate followers. He made his art as true to life as it is possible to be, without the rugged realism of Donatello or the somewhat effeminate graces of Ghiberti. The charm of his work is never impaired by scientific mannerism—that stumbling-block to critics like De Stendhal in the art of Florence; nor does it suffer from the picturesqueness of a sentimental style. How to render the beauty of nature in her most delightful moments—taking us with him into the holiest of holies, and handling the sacred vessels with a child's confiding boldness—was a secret known to Luca della Robbia alone. We may well find food for meditation in the innocent and cheerful inspiration of this man, whose lifetime coincided with a period of sordid passions and debased ambition in the Church and States of Italy.

Luca was apprenticed in his youth to a goldsmith; but of what he wrought before the age of forty-five, we know but little.<sup>41</sup> At that time his faculty had attained full maturity, and he produced the groups of dancing children and choristers intended for the organ gallery of the Duomo. Wholly free from affectation, and depending for effect upon

<sup>40</sup> Crowe and Cavalcaselle, vol. ii. chap. xvi., may be consulted as to the several claims of the two brothers.

<sup>41</sup> His bas-reliefs on Giotto's campanile of Grammar, Astronomy, Geometry, Plato, Aristotle, &c., are anterior to 1445; and even about this date there is uncertainty, some authorities fixing it at 1435.

no merely decorative detail, these bas-reliefs deserve the praise bestowed by Dante on the sculpture seen in Purgatory.<sup>42</sup>—

Dinanzi a noi pareva sì verace,  
Quivi intagliato in un atto soave,  
Che non sembrava immagine che tace.

Movement has never been suggested in stone with less exaggeration, nor have marble lips been made to utter sweeter and more varied music. Luca's true perception of the limits to be observed in sculpture, appears most eminently in the glazed terra-cotta work by which he is best known. An ordinary artist might have found the temptation to aim at showy and pictorial effects in this material overwhelming. Luca restrained himself to pure white on pale blue, and preserved an exquisite simplicity of line in all his compositions. There is an almost unearthly beauty in the profiles of his Madonnas, a tempered sweetness in the modulation of their drapery and attitude, that prove complete mastery in the art of rendering evanescent moments of expression, the most fragile subtleties of the emotions that can stir a tranquil spirit. Andrea della Robbia, the nephew of Luca, with his four sons, Giovanni, Luca, Ambrogio, and Girolamo, continued to manufacture the glazed earthenware of Luca's invention. These men, though excellent artificers, lacked the fine taste of their teacher. Coarser colours were introduced; the eye was dazzled with variety; but the power of speaking to the soul as Luca spoke was lost.<sup>43</sup>

After the Della Robbias, this is the place to mention Agostino di Gucci or di Duccio,<sup>44</sup> a sculptor who handled terra-cotta somewhat in the manner of Donatello's flat-relief, introducing more richness of detail and aiming at more passion than Luca's taste permitted. For the oratory of S. Bernardino at Perugia he designed the façade partly in stone and partly in baked clay—crowded with figures, flying, singing, playing upon instruments of music, with waving draperies and windy hair and the ecstasy of movement in their delicately modelled limbs. If nothing else remained of Agostino's workmanship, this façade alone would place him in the first rank of contemporary artists. He owed something, perhaps, to his material; for terra-cotta has the charm of improvisation. The hand, obedient to the brain, has made it in one moment what it is, and no slow hours of labour at the stone have dulled the first caprice of the creative fancy. Work, therefore, which, if translated into marble, might have left our sympathy unstirred, affects us with keen pleasure in the mould of plastic clay. What prodigality of thought and invention has been lavished on the terra-cotta models of unknown Italian artists! What forms and faces, beautiful as shapes

<sup>42</sup> *Purg.* x. 37, and xi. 68.

<sup>43</sup> Among the very best works of the later Robbian school may be cited the frieze upon the façade of the Ospedale del Ceppo at Pistoja, representing in varied colour, with graceful vivacity, the Seven Acts of Mercy. Date about 1525.

<sup>44</sup> He calls himself Agostinus Florentinus Lapidida on his façade of the Oratory of S. Bernardino.

of dreams, and, like dreams, so airy that we think they will take flight and vanish, lean to greet us from cloisters and palace fronts in Lombardy! To catalogue their multitude would be impossible. It is enough to select one instance out of many; this shall be taken from the chapel of S. Peter Martyr in S. Eustorgio at Milan. High up around the cupola runs a frieze of angels, singing together and dancing with joined hands, while bells composed of fruits and flowers hang down between them. Each angel is an individual shape of joy; the soul in each moves to its own deep melody, but the music made of all is one. Their raiment flutters, the bells chime; the chorus of their gladness falls like voices through a star-lit heaven, half-heard in dreams and everlastingly remembered.

Four sculptors, the younger contemporaries of Luca della Robbia, and marked by certain common qualities, demand attention next. All the work of Antonio Rossellino, Matteo Civitali, Mino da Fiesole, and Benedetto da Majano, is distinguished by sweetness, grace, tranquillity, and self-restraint—as though these artists had voluntarily imposed limits on their genius, refusing to trespass beyond a traced circle of religious subjects, or to aim at effects unrealisable by purity of outline, suavity of expression, delicacy of feeling, and urbanity of style. The charm of manner they possess in common, can scarcely be defined except by similes. The innocence of childhood, the melody of a lute or song-bird as distinguished from the music of an orchestra, the rather tints of early dawn, cheerful light on shallow streams, the serenity of a simple and untainted nature that has never known the world—many such images occur to the mind while thinking of the sculpture of these men. To charge them with insipidity, immaturity, and monotony, would be to mistake the force of genius and skill displayed by them. We should rather assume that they confined themselves to certain types of tranquil beauty, without caring to realise more obviously striking effects, and that this was their way of meeting the requirements of sculpture considered as a Christian art. The melody of their design, meanwhile, is like the purest song-music of Pergolese or Salvator Rosa, unapproachably perfect in simple outline, and inexhaustibly refreshing.

Though it is possible to characterise the style of these sculptors by some common qualities observable in their work, it should rather be the aim of criticism to point out their differences. Antonio Rossellino, for example, might be distinguished by his leaning toward the manner of Ghiberti, whose landscape backgrounds he has adopted in the circular medallions of his monumental sculpture. A fine perception of the poetic capabilities of Christian art is displayed in Rossellino's idyllic treatment of the Nativity—the adoration of the shepherds, the hush of reverential stillness in the worship Mary pays her infant son.<sup>45</sup> To the qualities of sweetness and tranquillity rare dignity is added in the

<sup>45</sup> See especially a roundel in the Bargello, and the altar-piece in the church of Monte Oliveto at Naples. Those who wish to understand Rossellino should study him in the latter place.

monument of the young Cardinal di Portogallo.<sup>46</sup> The sublimity of the slumber that is death has never been more nobly and feelingly portrayed than in the supine figure and sleeping features of this most beautiful young man, who lies watched by angels beneath a heavy-curtained canopy. The genii of eternal repose modelled by Greek sculptors are twin-brothers of Love, on whom perpetual slumber has descended amid poppy-fields by Lethe's stream. The turmoil of the world is over for them; they will never wake again; they do not even dream. Sleep is the only power that still has life in them. But the Christian cannot thus conceive the mystery of the soul 'fallen on sleep.' His art must suggest a time of waiting and a time of waking; and this it does partly through the ministration of attendant angels, who would not be standing there on guard if the clay-cold corpse had no futurity, partly by breathing upon the limbs and visage of the dead a spirit as of life suspended for a while. Thus the soul herself is imaged in the marble 'most sweetly slumbering in the gates of dreams.'

What Vespasiano tells us of this cardinal, born of the royal house of Portugal, adds the virtue of sincerity to Rossellino's work, proving there is no flattery of the dead man in his sculpture.<sup>47</sup> 'Among his other admirable virtues,' says the biographer, 'Messer Jacopo di Portogallo determined to preserve his virginity, though he was beautiful above all others of his age. Consequently he avoided all things that might prove impediments to his vow, such as free discourse, the society of women, balls, and songs. In this mortal flesh he lived as though he had been free from it—the life, we may say, rather of an angel than a man. And if his biography were written from his childhood to his death, it would be not only an ensample, but confusion to the world. Upon his monument the hand was modelled from his own, and the face is very like him, for he was most lovely in his person, but still more in his soul.'

While contemplating this monument of the young cardinal, we feel that the Italians of that age understood sepulchral sculpture far better than their immediate successors. They knew how to carve the very soul, according to the lines which our Webster, a keen observer of all things relating to the grave and death, has put into Jolenta's lips:—

But indeed,  
If ever I would have mine drawn to the life,  
I would have a painter steal it at such time  
I were devoutly kneeling at my prayers;  
There is then a heavenly beauty in't; *the soul*  
*Moves in the Superfices.*

The same Webster condemns that evil custom of aping life and movement on the monuments of dead men, which began to obtain when the motives of pure repose had been exhausted. 'Why,' asks the Duchess of Malfi, 'do we grow fantastical in our death-bed? Do we affect fashion in the grave?' 'Most ambitiously,' answers Bosola; 'princes' images on

<sup>46</sup> In the church of Samminiato, near Florence.

<sup>47</sup> *Vite di Uomini Illustri*, pp. 152-157.

their tombs do not lie as they were wont, seeming to pray up to heaven; but with their hands under their cheeks (as if they died of the toothache): they are not carved with their eyes fixed upon the stars; but, as their minds were wholly bent upon the world, the self-same way they seem to turn their faces.' A more trenchant criticism than this could hardly have been pronounced upon Andrea Contucci di Monte Sansavino's tombs of Ascanio Sforza and Girolamo della Rovere, if Bosola had been standing before them in the church of S. Maria del Popolo when he spoke. Were it the function of monumental sculpture to satirise the dead, or to point out their characteristic faults for the warning of posterity, then the sepulchres of these worldly cardinals of Sixtus IV.'s creation would be artistically justified. But the object of art is not this. The idea of death, as conceived by Christians, has to be portrayed. The repose of the just, the resurrection of the body, and the coming judgment, afford sufficient scope for treatment of good men and bad alike. Or if the sculptor have sublime imagination, he may, like Michael Angelo, suggest the alternations of the day and night, slumber and waking, whereby 'our little life is rounded with a sleep.'

This digression will hardly be thought superfluous when we reflect how large a part of the sculptor's energy was spent on tombs in Italy. Matteo Civitali of Lucca was at least Rossellino's equal in the sculptural delineation of spiritual qualities; but the motives he chose for treatment were more varied. All his work is penetrated with deep, prayerful, intense feeling; as though the artist's soul, poured forth in ecstasy and adoration, had been given to the marble. This is especially true of two angels kneeling upon the altar of the Chapel of the Sacrament in Lucca Cathedral. Civitali, by singular good fortune, was chosen in the best years of his life to adorn the cathedral of his native city; and it is here, rather than at Genoa, where much of his sculpture may also be seen, that he deserves to be studied. For the people of Lucca he designed the Chapel of the Santo Volto—a gem of the purest Renaissance architecture—and a pulpit in the same style. His most remarkable sculpture is to be found in three monuments: the tombs of Domenico Bertini and Pietro da Noceto, and the altar of S. Regulus. The last might be chosen as an epitome of all that is most characteristic in Tuscan sculpture of the earlier Renaissance. It is built against the wall, and architecturally designed so as to comprehend a full-length figure of the bishop stretched upon his bier and watched by angels, a group of Madonna and her child seated above him, a row of standing saints below, and a predella composed of four delicately finished bas-reliefs. Every part of this complex work is conceived with spirit and executed with care; and the various elements are so combined as to make one composition, the body of the saint on his sarcophagus forming the central object of the whole.

To do more than briefly mention the minor sculptors of this group would be impossible. Mino di Giovanni, called Da Fiesole, was characterised by grace that tended to degenerate into formality. The tombs



in the Abbey of Florence have an almost infantine sweetness of style, which might be extremely piquant, were it not that Mino pushed this quality in other works to the verge of mannerism.<sup>48</sup> Their architectural features are the same as those of similar monuments in Tuscany:—a shallow recess, flanked by Renaissance pilasters, and roofed with a semicircular arch; within the recess, the full-length figure of the dead man on a marble coffin of antique design; in the lunette above, a Madonna carved in low relief.<sup>49</sup> Mino's bust of Bishop Salutati in the cathedral church of Fiesole is a powerful portrait, no less distinguished for vigorous individuality than consummate workmanship. The wax-like finish of the finely chiselled marble alone betrays that delicacy which with Mino verged on insipidity. The same faculty of character delineation is seen in three profiles, now in the Bargello Museum, attributed to Mino. They represent Frederick Duke of Urbino, Battista Sforza, and Galeazzo Sforza. The relief is very low, rising at no point more than half an inch above the surface of the ground, but so carefully modulated as to present a wonderful variety of light and shade, and to render the facial expression with great vividness.

Desiderio da Settignano, one of Donatello's few scholars, was endowed with the same gift of exquisite taste as his friend Mino da Fiesole;<sup>50</sup> but his inventive faculty was bolder, and his genius more robust, in spite of the profuse ornamentation and elaborate finish of his masterpiece, the tomb of Carlo Marsuppini in S. Croce. The bust he made of Marietta di Palla degli Strozzi enables us to compare his style in portraiture with that of Mino.<sup>51</sup> It would be hard to find elsewhere a more captivating combination of womanly sweetness and dignity. We feel, in looking at these products of the best age of Italian sculpture, that the artists who conceived them were, in the truest sense of the word, gentle. None but men courteous and unaffected could have carved a face like that of Marietta Strozzi, breathing the very spirit of urbanity. To express the most amiable qualities of a living person in a work of art that should suggest emotional tranquillity by harmonious treatment, and indicate the temperance of a disciplined nature by self-

<sup>48</sup> These tombs in the Badia were erected for Count Ugo, Governor of Tuscany under Otho II., and for Messer Bernardo Giugni. Mino also made the tomb for Pope Paul II., parts of which are preserved in the Grotte of S. Peter's. At Rome he carved a tabernacle for S. Maria in Trastevere, and at Volterra a ciborium for the Baptistry—one of his most sympathetic productions. The altars in the Baglioni Chapel of S. Pietro Cassinese at Perugia, in S. Ambrogio at Florence, and in the cathedral of Fiesole, and the pulpit in the Duomo at Prato, may be mentioned among his best works.

<sup>49</sup> Besides Civitali's altar of S. Regulus, and the tomb of Pietro da Noceto already mentioned, Bernardo Rossellino's monument to Lionardo Bruni, and Desiderio's monument to Carlo Marsuppini in S. Croce at Florence, may be cited as eminent examples of Tuscan sepulchres.

<sup>50</sup> The wooden statue of the Magdalen in Santa Trinità at Florence shows Desiderio's approximation to the style of his master. She is a careworn and ascetic saint, with the pathetic traces of great beauty in her emaciated face.

<sup>51</sup> This bust is in the Palazzo Strozzi at Florence.

restraint and moderation of style, and to do this with the highest technical perfection, was the triumph of fifteenth-century sculpture.

An artist who claims a third place beside Mino and his friend, 'il bravo Desider si dolce e bello,'<sup>52</sup> is Benedetto da Majano. In Benedetto's bas-reliefs at San Gimignano, carved for the altars of those unlovely Tuscan worthies, S. Fina and S. Bartolo, we find a pictorial treatment of legendary subjects, proving that he had studied Ghirlandajo's frescoes. The same is true about his pulpit in S. Croce at Florence, his treatment of the story of S. Savino at Faenza, and his 'Annunciation' in the church of Monte Oliveto at Naples. Benedetto, indeed, may be said to illustrate the working of Ghiberti's influence by his liberal use of landscape and architectural backgrounds; but the style is rather Ghirlandajo's than Ghiberti's. If it was a mistake in the sculptors of that period to subordinate their art to painting, the error, we feel, was aggravated by the imitation of a manner so prosaic as that of Ghirlandajo. That Benedetto began life as a *tarsiatore* may perhaps help to account for his pictorial style in bas-relief.<sup>53</sup> In estimating his total claim as an artist, we must not forget that he designed the formidable and splendid Strozzi Palace.

It will be observed that all the sculptors hitherto mentioned have been Tuscans; and this is due to no mere accident—nor yet to caprice on the part of their historian. Though the other districts of Italy produced admirable workmen, the direction given to this art proceeded from Tuscany. Florence, the metropolis of modern culture, determined the course of the æsthetical Renaissance. Even at Rimini we cannot account for the carvings in low relief, so fanciful, so delicately wrought, and so profusely scattered over the side chapels of S. Francesco, without the intervention of two Florentines, Bernardo Ciuffagni and Donatello's pupil Simone; while in the palace of Urbino we trace some hand not unlike that of Mino da Fiesole at work upon the mouldings of door and architrave, cornice and high-built chimney.<sup>54</sup> Not only do we thus find Tuscan craftsmen or their scholars employed on all the great public

<sup>52</sup> So Giovanni Santi, Raphael's father, described Desiderio da Settignano.

<sup>53</sup> The following story is told about Benedetto's youth. He made two large inlaid chests or  *cassoni* , adorned with all the skill of a worker in tarsia, or wood-mosaic, and carried these with him to King Matthias Corvinus, of Hungary. Part of his journey was performed by sea. On arriving and unpacking his chests, he found that the sea-damp had unglued the fragile wood-mosaic, and all his work was spoiled. This determined him to practise the more permanent art of sculpture. See Perkins, vol. i. p. 228.

<sup>54</sup> For further description of the sculpture at Rimini, I may refer to my *Sketches in Italy and Greece*, pp. 250-252. For the student of Italian art, who has no opportunity of visiting Rimini, it is greatly to be regretted that these reliefs have never yet even in photography been reproduced. The palace of Duke Frederick at Urbino was designed by Luziano, a Dalmatian architect, and continued by Baccio Pontelli, a Florentine. The reliefs of dancing Cupids, white on blue ground, with wings and hair gilt, and the children holding pots of roses and gilly-flowers, in one of its great rooms, may be selected for special mention. Ambrogio or Ambrogino da Milano, none of whose handiwork is found in his native district, and who may therefore be supposed to have learned and practised his art elsewhere, was the sculptor of these truly genial reliefs.

buildings throughout Italy; but it also happens that, except in Tuscany, the decoration of churches and palaces is not unfrequently anonymous.

This does not, however, interfere with the truth that sculpture, like all the arts, assumed a somewhat different character in each Italian city. The Venetian stone-carvers leaned from the first to a richer and more passionate style than the Florentine, reproducing the types of Cima's and Bellini's paintings.<sup>55</sup> Whole families, like the Bregni—classes, like the Lombardi—schools, like that of Alessandro Leopardi, worked together on the monumental sculpture of S. Zanipolo. In the tombs of the Doges the old Pisan motive of the curtains (first used by Arnolfo di Cambio at Orvieto, and afterwards with grand effect by Giovanni Pisano at Perugia) is expanded into a sumptuous tent-canopy. Pages and genii and mailed heroes take the place of angels, and the marine details of Roman reliefs are copied in the subordinate decoration. At Verona the mediæval tombs of the Scaligers, with their vast chest-like sarcophagi and mounted warriors, exhibit features markedly different from the monuments of Tuscany; while the mixture of fresco with sculpture, in monuments like that of the Cavalli in S. Anastasia, and in many altar-pieces, is at variance with Florentine usage. On the terra-cotta mouldings, so frequent in Lombard cities, I have already had occasion to touch briefly. They almost invariably display a feeling for beauty more sensuous, with less of scientific purpose in their naturalism, than is common in the Tuscan style. Guido Mazzoni of Modena, called Il Modanino, may be mentioned as the sculptor who freed terra-cotta from its dependence upon architecture, and who modelled groups of overpowering dramatic realism. His 'Pietà,' in the Church of Monte Oliveto at Naples, is valuable, less for its passionate intensity of expression than for the portraits of Pontano, Sannazzaro, and Alfonso of Aragon.<sup>56</sup> This sub-species of sculpture was freely employed in North Italy to stimulate devotion, and to impress the people with lively pictures of the Passion. The Sacro Monte at Varallo, for example, is covered with a multitude of chapels, each one of which presents some chapter of Bible history dramatically rendered by life-size groups of terra-cotta figures. Some of these were designed by eminent painters, and executed by clever modellers in clay. Even now they are scarcely less stirring to the mind of a devout spectator than the scenes of a mediæval Mystery may have been.

The Certosa of Pavia, lastly, is the centre of a school of sculpture that has little in common with the Florentine tradition. Antonio Amadeo<sup>57</sup> and Andrea Fusina, acting in concert with Ambrogio Bor-

<sup>55</sup> See, for example, the remarkable bas-relief of the Doge Lionardo Loredano engraved by Perkins, *Italian Sculptors*, p. 201.

<sup>56</sup> Another Modenese, Antonio Begarelli, born in 1479, developed this art of the *plasticatore*, with quite as much pictorial impressiveness, and in a style of stricter science, than his predecessor Il Modanino. His masterpieces are the 'Deposition from the Cross' in S. Francesco, and the 'Pietà' in S. Pietro, of his native city.

<sup>57</sup> The name of this great master is variously written—Giovanni Antonio Amadeo, or Omodeo, or degli Amadei, or de' Madeo, or a Madeo—pointing possibly to the

gognone the painter, gave it in the fifteenth century that character of rich and complex decorative beauty which many generations of artists were destined to continue and complete. Among the countless sculptors employed upon its marvellous façade Amadeo asserts an individuality above the rest, which is further manifested in his work in the Cappella Colleoni at Bergamo. We there learn to know him, not only as an enthusiastic cultivator of the mingled Christian and pagan manner of the *quattrocento*, but as an artist in the truest sense of the word sympathetic. The sepulchral portrait of Medea, daughter of the great Condottiere, has a grace almost beyond that of Della Quercia's 'Ilaria.'<sup>58</sup> Much, no doubt, is due to the peculiarly fragile beauty of the girl herself, who lies asleep with little crisp curls clustering upon her forehead, and with a string of pearls around her slender throat. But the sensibility to loveliness so delicate, and the power to render it in marble with so ethereal a touch upon the rigid stone, belong to the sculptor, and win for him our worship.

The list of fifteenth-century sculptors is almost ended; and already, on the threshold of the sixteenth, stands the mighty form of Michael Angelo. Andrea Contucci da Sansavino and his pupil Jacopo Tatti, called also Sansovino, after his master, must, however, next be mentioned as continuing the Florentine tradition without subservience to the style of Buonarroti. Andrea da Sansavino was a sculptor in whom for the first time the faults of the mid-Renaissance period are glaringly apparent. He persistently sacrificed simplicity of composition to decorative ostentation, and tranquillity of feeling to theatrical effect. The truth of this will be acknowledged by all who have studied the tombs of the cardinals in S. Maria del Popolo already mentioned,<sup>59</sup> and the bas-reliefs upon the Santa Casa at Loreto. In technical workmanship Andrea proved himself an able craftsman, modelling marble with the plasticity of wax, and lavishing patterns of the most refined invention. Yet the decorative prodigality of this master corresponded to the frigid and stylistic graces of the neo-Latin poets. It was so much mannerism—adopted without real passion from the antique, and applied with a rhetorical intention. Those acanthus scrolls and honeysuckle borders, in spite of their consummate finish, fail to arrest attention, leaving the soul as unstirred as the Ovidian cadences of Bembo.

Jacopo Tatti was a genius of more distinction. Together with San Gallo and Bramante he studied the science of architecture in Rome,

town Madeo as his native place. Through a long life he worked upon the fabric of the Milanese Duomo, the Certosa of Pavia, and the Chapel of Colleoni at Bergamo. To him we owe the general design of the façade of the Certosa and the cupola of the Duomo of Milan. For the details of his work and an estimate of his capacity, see Perkins, *Italian Sculptors*, pp. 127-137.

<sup>58</sup> This statue was originally intended for a chapel built and endowed by Colleoni at Basella, near Bergamo. When he determined to erect his chapel in S. Maria Maggiore at Bergamo, he entrusted the execution of this new work to Amadeo, and the monument of Medea was subsequently placed there.

<sup>59</sup> See above, p. 659. I have spelt the name *Sansovino*, when applied to Jacopo Tatti, in accordance with time-honoured usage.

where he also worked at the restoration of newly discovered antiques, and cast in bronze a copy of the 'Laocoon.' Thus equipped with the artistic learning of his age, he was called in 1523 by the Doge, Andrea Gritti, to Venice. The material pomp of Venice at this epoch, and the pride of her unrivalled luxury, affected his imagination so powerfully that his genius, tutored by Florentine and Umbrian masters among the ruins of old Rome, became at once Venetian. In the history of the Renaissance the names of Titian and Aretino, themselves acclimatised aliens, are inseparably connected with that of their friend Sansovino. At Venice he lived until his death in 1570, building the Zecca, the Library, the Scala d'Oro in the Ducal Palace, and the Loggia beneath the bell-tower of S. Mark. In all his work he subordinated sculpture to architecture, and his statuary is conceived in the *bravura* manner of Renaissance paganism. Whatever may be the faults of Sansovino in both arts, it cannot be denied that he expressed, in a style peculiar to himself, the large voluptuous external life of Venice at a moment when this city was the Paris or the Corinth of Renaissance Europe. At the same time, the shallowness of Sansovino's inspiration as a sculptor is patent in his masterpieces of parade—the 'Neptune' and the 'Mars,' guarding the Scala d' Oro. Separated from the architecture of the court and staircase, they are insignificant in spite of their colossal scale. In their place they add a haughty grandeur, by the contrast which their flowing forms and arrogant attitudes present to the severer lines of the construction. But they are devoid of artistic sincerity, and occupy the same relation to true sculpture as flourishes of rhetoric, however brilliant, to poetry embodying deep thought or passion. At first sight they impose: on further acquaintance we find them chiefly interesting as illustrations of a potent civic life upon the wane, gorgeous in its decay.

Sansovino was a first-rate craftsman. The most finished specimen of his skill is the bronze door of the Sacristy of S. Marco, upon which he is said to have worked through twenty years. Portraits of the sculptor, Titian, and Pietro Aretino are introduced into the decorative border. These heads start from the surface of the gate with astonishing vivacity. That Aretino should thus daily assist in effigy at the procession of priests bearing the sacred emblems from the sacristy to the high altar of S. Mark, is one of the most characteristic proofs of sixteenth-century indifference to things holy and things profane.

Jacopo Sansovino marks the final intrusion of paganism into modern art. The classical revival had worked but partially and indirectly upon Ghiberti and Donatello—not because they did not feel it most intensely, but because they clung to nature far more closely than to antique precedent. This enthusiasm inspired Sansovino with the best and strongest qualities that he can boast; and if his genius had been powerful enough to resist the fascination of merely rhetorical effects, he might have produced a perfect restoration of the classic style. His was no lifeless or pedantic imitation of antique fragments, but a real expression of the fervour with which the modern world hailed the discoveries re-

vealed to it by scholarship. This is said advisedly. The most beautiful and spirited pagan statue of the Renaissance period, justifying the estimate here made of Sansovino's genius, is the 'Bacchus' exhibited in the Bargello Museum. Both the Bacchus and the Satyriscus at his side are triumphs of realism, irradiated and idealised by the sculptor's vivid sense of natural gladness. Considered as a restitution of the antique manner, this statue is decidedly superior to the 'Bacchus' of Michael Angelo. While the mundane splendour of Venice gave body and fulness to Sansovino's paganism, he missed the self-restraint and purity of taste peculiar to the studious shades of Florence. In his style, both architectural and sculptural, the neo-pagan sensuality of Italy expanded all its bloom.

For the artist at this period a Greek myth and a Christian legend were all one. Both afforded the occasion for displaying technical skill in fluent forms, devoid of any but voluptuous feeling; while both might be subordinated to rich effects of decoration.<sup>60</sup> To this point the intellectual culture of the fifteenth century had brought the plastic arts of Italy, by a process similar to that which ended in the 'Partus Virginis' of Sannazzaro. They were still indisputably vigorous, and working in accordance with the movement of the modern spirit. Yet the synthesis they attempted to effect between heathenism and Christianity, by a sheer effort of style, and by indifferentism, strikes us from the point of view of art alone, not reckoning religion or morality, as unsuccessful. Still, if it be childish on the one hand to deplore that the Christian earnestness of the earlier masters had failed, it would be even more ridiculous to complain that paganism had not been more entirely recovered. The double-mind of the Renaissance, the source of its weakness in art as in thought, could not be avoided, because humanity at this moment had to lose the mediæval sincerity of faith, and to assimilate the spirit of a bygone civilisation. This, for better or for worse, was the phase through which the intellect of modern Europe was obliged to pass; and those who have confidence in the destinies of the human race, will not spend their strength in moaning over such shortcomings as the periods of transition bring inevitably with them. The student of Italian history may indeed more reasonably be allowed to question whether the arts, if left to follow their own development unchecked, might not have recovered from the confusion of the Renaissance and have entered on a stage of nobler activity through earnest and unaffected study of nature. But the enslavement of the country, together with the counter-Reformation, suspended the Renaissance in mid-career; and what remains of Italian art is incomplete. Besides, it must be borne in mind that the confusion of opinions consequent upon the clash of the modern with the ancient world, left no body of generally accepted beliefs to express; nor has the time even yet arrived for a settlement and synthesis that shall be favourable to the activity of the figurative arts.

<sup>60</sup> To multiply instances is tedious; but notice in this connection the Hermaphroditic statue of S. Sebastian at Orvieto, near the western door. It is a fair work of Lo Scalza.

Sansovino himself was neither original nor powerful enough to elevate the mixed motives of Renaissance sculpture by any lofty idealisation. To do that remained for Michael Angelo. The greatness of Michael Angelo consists in this—that while literature was sinking into the frivolity of Academies and the filth of the Bernesque ‘Capitoli,’ while the barefaced villanies of Aretino won him credit, while sensual magnificence formed the ideal of artists who were neither Greeks nor Christians, while Ariosto found no subject fitter for his genius than a glittering romance, he and he alone maintained the Dantesque dignity of the Italian intellect in his sculpture. Michael Angelo stands so far apart from other men, and is so gigantic a force for good and evil in the history of art, that to estimate his life and labour in relation to the Renaissance must form the subject of a separate chapter. For the present it is enough to observe that his immediate scholars, Raffaello da Montelupo, and Gian Angelo Montorsoli, caught little from their master but the mannerism of contorted form and agitated action. This mannerism, a blemish even in the strong work of Buonarroto, became ridiculous when adopted by men of feeble powers and passionless imagination. By straining the art of sculpture to its utmost limits, Michael Angelo expressed vehement emotions in marble; and the forced attitudes affected in his work had their value as significant of spiritual struggle. His imitators showed none of their master’s sublime force, none of that *terribilità* which made him unapproachable in social intercourse and inimitable in art. They merely fancied that dignity and beauty were to be achieved by placing figures in difficult postures, exaggerated muscular anatomy, and twisting the limbs of their models upon sections of ellipses in uncomfortable attitudes, till the whole of their work was writhen into uncouth lines. Buonarroto himself was not responsible for these results. He wrought out his own ideal with the firmness of a genius that obeys the law of its own nature, doing always what it must. That the decadence of sculpture into truculent bravado was independent of his direct influence is further proved by the inefficiency of his contemporaries.

Baccio Bandinelli and Bartolommeo Ammanati filled the squares of the Italian cities with statues of Hercules and Satyrs, Neptune and River-gods. We know not whether to select the vulgarity, the feebleness, or the pretentiousness of these pseudo-classical colossi for condemnation. They have nothing Greek about them but their names, their nakedness, and their association with myths, the significance whereof was never really felt by the sculptors. Some of Bandinelli’s designs, it is true, are vigorous; but they are mere drawings from undraped peasants, life studies depicting the human animal. His ‘Hercules and Cacus,’ while it deserves all the sarcasm hurled at it by Cellini, proves that Bandinelli could not rise above the wrestling bout of a porter and a coal-heaver. Nor would it be possible to invent a motive less in accordance with Greek taste than the conceit of Ammanati’s fountain at Castello, where Hercules by squeezing the body of Antæus makes the



drinking water of a city spout from a giant's mouth. Such pitiful misapplications of an art which is designed to elevate the commonplace of human form, and to render permanent the nobler qualities of physical existence, show how superficially and wrongly the antique spirit had been apprehended.

Some years before his death Ammanati expressed in public his regret that he had made so many giants and satyrs, feeling that, by exhibiting forms of lust, brutality, and animalism to the gaze of his fellow-countrymen, he had sinned against the higher law revealed by Christianity. For a Greek artist to have spoken thus would have been impossible. The Faun, the Titan, and the Satyr had a meaning for him, which he sought to set forth in accordance with the semi-religious, semi-poetical traditions of his race; and when he was at work upon a myth of nature-forces, he well knew that at the other end of the scale, separated by no spiritual barrier, but removed to an almost infinite distance of refinement, Zeus, Phoebus, and Pallas claimed his loftier artistic inspiration. Ammanati's confession, on the contrary, betrays that schism between the conscience of Christianity and the lusts let loose by ill-assimilated sympathy with antique heathenism, which was a marked characteristic of the Renaissance. The coarser passions, held in check by ecclesiastical discipline, dared to emerge into the light of day under the supposed sanction of classical examples. What the Visconti and the Borgias practised in their secret chambers, the sculptors exposed in marble and the poets in verse. All alike, however, were mistaken in supposing that antique precedent sanctioned this efflorescence of immorality. No amount of Greek epigrams by Strato and Meleager, nor all the Herma-phrodités and Priapi of Rome, had power to annul the law of conduct established by the founders of Christianity, and ratified by the higher instincts of the Middle Ages. Nor again were artists justified before the bar of conscience in selecting the baser elements of Paganism for imitation, instead of aiming at Greek self-restraint and Roman strength of character. All this the men of the Renaissance felt when they listened to the voice within them. Their work, therefore, in so far as it pretended to be a reconstruction of the antique was false. The sensuality it shared in common with many Greek and Roman masterpieces had ceased to be frank and in the true sense pagan. To shake off Christianity, and to revert with an untroubled conscience to the manners of a bygone age, was what they could not do.

The errors I have attempted to characterise did not, however, prevent the better and more careful works of sculpture, executed in illustration of classical mythology, from having a true value. The 'Perseus' of Cellini and some of Gian Bologna's statues belong to a class of æsthetic productions which show how much that is both original and excellent may be raised in the hotbed of culture.<sup>61</sup> They express a genuine moment of the Renaissance with vigour, and deserve to be ranked with

<sup>61</sup> This brief allusion to Cellini must suffice for the moment, as I intend to treat of him in a separate chapter.

the Latin poetry of Poliziano, Bembo, and Pontano. The worst that can be said of them is that their inspiration was factitious, and that their motives had been handled better in the age of Greek sincerity.

Gian Bologna, born at Douai, but a Florentine by education, devoted himself almost exclusively to mythological sculpture. That he was a greater sculptor than his immediate predecessors will be affirmed by all who have studied his bronze 'Mercury,' the 'Venus of Petraja,' and the 'Neptune' on the fountain of Bologna. Something of the genuine classic feeling had passed into his nature. The 'Mercury' is not a reminiscence of any antique statue. It gives in bronze a faithful and spirited reading of Virgil's lines, and is conceived with artistic purity not unworthy of a good Greek period. The 'Neptune' is something more than a muscular old man; and, in its place, it forms one of the most striking ornaments of Italy. It is worthy of remark that sculpture, in this stage, continued to be decorative. Fountains are among the most successful monuments of the late Renaissance. Even Montorsoli's fountain at Messina is in a high sense picturesquely beautiful.

Casting a glance backward over the foregoing sketch of Italian sculpture, it will be seen that three distinct stages were traversed in the evolution of this art. The first may be called architectural, the second pictorial, the third neo-pagan. Defined by their artistic purposes, the first idealises Christian motives; the second is naturalistic; the third attempts an idealisation inspired by revived paganism. As far as the Renaissance is concerned, all three are moments in its history; though it was only during the third that the influences of the classical revival made themselves overwhelmingly felt. Niccola Pisano in the first stage marked a fresh point of departure for his art by a return to Græco-Roman standards of the purest type then attainable, in combination with the study of nature. Giovanni Pisano effected a fusion between his father's manner and the Gothic style. The Pisan sculpture was wholly Christian; nor did it attempt to free itself from the service of architecture. Giotto opened the second stage by introducing new motives, employed by him with paramount mastery in painting. Under his influence the sculptors inclined to picturesque effects, and the direction thus given to sculpture lasted through the fifteenth century. For the rest, the style of these masters was distinguished by a fresh and charming naturalism and by rapid growth in technical processes. While assimilating much of the classical spirit, they remained on the whole Christian; and herein they were confirmed by the subjects they were chiefly called upon to treat, in the decoration of altars, pulpits, church façades, and tombs. The revived interest in antique literature widened their sympathies and supplied their fancy with new material; but there is no imitative formalism in their work. Its beauty consists in a certain immature blending of motives chosen almost indiscriminately from Christian and pagan mythology, vitalised by the imagination of the artist, and presented with the originality of true creative instinct. During the third stage the results of prolonged and almost exclusive attention to

the classics, on the part of the Italians as a people, make themselves manifest. Collections of antiquities and libraries had been formed in the fifteenth century; the literary energies of the nation were devoted to the interpretation of Greek and Latin texts, and the manners of society affected paganism. At the same time a worldly Church and a corrupt hierarchy had done their utmost to enfeeble the spirit of Christianity. That art should prove itself sensitive to this phase of intellectual and social life was natural. Religious subjects were now treated by the sculptors with superficial formalism and cynical indifference, while all their ingenuity was bestowed upon providing pagan myths with new forms. How far they succeeded has been already made the matter of inquiry. The most serious condemnation of art in this third period is that it halted between two opinions, that it could not be sincere. But this double-mindedness, as I have tried to show, was necessary; and therefore to lament over it is weak. What the Renaissance achieved for the modern world was the liberation of the reason, the power of starting on a new career of progress. The false direction given to the art of sculpture at one moment of this intellectual revival may be deplored; and still more deplorable is the corresponding sensual debasement of the race who won for us the possibility of freedom. But the life of humanity is long and vigorous, and the philosopher of history knows well that the sum total of accomplishment at any time must be diminished by an unavoidable discount. The Renaissance, like a man of genius, had the defects of its qualities.

## CHAPTER IV

### PAINTING

*Distribution of Artistic Gifts in Italy—Florence and Venice—Classification by Schools—Stages in the Evolution of Painting—Cimabue—The Rucellai Madonna—Giotto—His widespread Activity—The Scope of his Art—Vitality—Composition—Colour—Naturalism—Healthiness—Frescoes at Assisi and Padua—Legend of S. Francis—The Giotteschi—Pictures of the Last Judgment—Orcagna in the Sirozzi Chapel—Ambrogio Lorenzetti at Pisa—Dogmatic Theology—Cappella degli Spagnuoli—Traini's 'Triumph of S. Thomas Aquinas'—Political Doctrine expressed in Fresco—Sala della Pace at Siena—Religious Art in Siena and Perugia—The Relation of the Giottesque Painters to the Renaissance.*

It is the duty of the historian of painting to trace the beginnings of art in each of the Italian communities, to differentiate their local styles, and to explain their mutual connections. For the present generation this work is being done with all-sufficient thoroughness and accuracy.<sup>1</sup> The historian of culture, on the other hand, for whom the arts form one important branch of intellectual activity, may dispense with these detailed inquiries, and may endeavour to seize the more general outlines of the subject. He need not weigh in balances the claims of rival cities to priority, nor hamper his review of national progress by discussing the special merits of the several schools. Still there are certain broad facts about the distribution of artistic gifts in Italy which it is necessary to bear in mind. However much we may desire to treat of painting as a phase of national and not of merely local life, the fundamental difficulty of Italian history, its complexity and variety, owing to the subdivisions of the nation into divers states, must here as elsewhere be acknowledged. To deny that each of the Italian centres had its own strong personality in art—that painting, as practised in Genoa or Naples, differed from the painting of Ferrara or Urbino—would be to contradict a law that has been over and over again insisted upon already in these volumes.

The broad outlines of the subject can be briefly stated. Surveying the map of Italy, we find that we may eliminate from our consideration the north-western and the southern provinces. Not from Piedmont nor from Liguria, not from Rome nor from the extensive kingdom of Naples, does Italian painting take its origin, or at any period derive important contributions.<sup>2</sup> Lombardy, with the exception of Venice, is compara-

<sup>1</sup> In the *History of Painting in Italy*, by Messrs. Crowe and Cavalcaselle.

<sup>2</sup> Nothing is more astonishing than the sterility of Genoa and of Rome. Neither in sculpture nor in painting did these cities produce anything memorable, though Genoa was well placed for receiving the influences of Pisa, and had the command of the

tively barren of originaive elements.<sup>3</sup> To Tuscany, to Umbria, and to Venice, roughly speaking, are due the really creative forces of Italian painting; and these three districts were marked by strong peculiarities. In art, as in politics, Florence and Venice exhibit distinct types of character.<sup>4</sup> The Florentines developed fresco, and devoted their genius to the expression of thought by scientific design. The Venetians perfected oil-painting, and set forth the glory of the world as it appeals to the imagination and the senses. The art of Florence may seem to some judges to savour over-much of intellectual dryness; the art of Venice, in the apprehension of another class of critics, offers something over-much of material richness. More allied to the Tuscan than to the Venetian spirit, the Umbrian masters produced a style of genuine originality. The cities of the Central Apennines owed their specific quality of religious fervour to the influences emanating from Assisi, the headquarters of the *cultus* of S. Francis. This pietism, nowhere else so paramount, except for a short period in Siena, constitutes the individuality of Umbria.

With regard to the rest of Italy, the old custom of speaking about schools and places, instead of signalising great masters, has led to misconception, by making it appear that local circumstances were more important than the facts justify. We do not find elsewhere what we find in Tuscany, in Umbria, and in Venice—a definite quality, native to the district, shared through many generations by all its painters, and culminating in a few men of commanding genius. When, for instance, we speak of the School of Milan, what we mean is the continuation through Lionardo da Vinci and his pupils of the Florentine tradition, as modified by him and introduced into the Lombard capital. That a special style was developed by Luini, Ferrari, and other artists of the Milanese duchy, so that their manner differs essentially from that of Parma and Cremona, does not invalidate the importance of this fact about its origin. The name of Roman School, again, has been given to Raphael and Michael Angelo together with their pupils. The truth is that Rome, for one brief period, during the pontificates of Julius and Leo, was the focus of Italian intellect. Allured by the patronage of the Papal Curia, not only artists, but scholars and men of letters, flocked from all the cities of Italy to Rome, where they found a nobler sphere for the exercise of their faculties than elsewhere. But Rome, while she lent her imperial quality of grandeur to the genius of her aliens, was in no sense originaive. Rome produced no first-rate master

marble quarries of Carrara, while Rome was the resort of all the art-students of Italy. The very early eminence of Apulia in architecture and the plastic arts led to no results.

<sup>3</sup> Milan, it is true, produced a brilliant school of sculptors, and the Certosa of Pavia is a monument of her spontaneous artistic genius. But in painting, until the date of Lionardo's advent, she achieved little.

<sup>4</sup> See *Age of the Despots*, pp. 117-121, for the constitutional characteristics of Florence and Venice; and *Revival of Learning*, pp. 404-405, for the intellectual supremacy of Florence.

from her own children, if we except Giulio Romano. The title of originality is due rather to Padua, the birthplace of Mantegna, or to Parma, the city of Correggio, whose works display independence of either Florentine or Venetian traditions. Yet these great masters were isolated, neither expressing in any definite form the character of their districts, nor founding a succession of local artists. Their influence was incontestably great, but widely diffused. Bologna and Ferrara, Brescia and Bergamo, Cremona and Verona, have excellent painters; and it is not difficult to show that in each of these cities art assumed specific characters. Yet the interest of the schools in these towns is due mainly to the varied influences brought to bear upon them from Venice, Umbria, and Milan. In other words they are affiliated, each according to its geographical position, to the chief originative centres.

What I have advanced in the foregoing paragraphs is not meant for a polemic against the time-honoured division of Italian painters into local schools, but for a justification of my own proposed method of treatment. Having undertaken to deal with painting as the paramount art-product of the Renaissance, it will be my object to point out the leading characteristics of æsthetic culture in Italy, rather than to dwell upon its specific differences. The Venetian painters I intend to reserve for a separate chapter, devoting this and the two next to the general history of the art as developed in Tuscany and propagated by Tuscan influences.<sup>5</sup> In pursuing this plan I shall endeavour to show how the successive stages in the evolution of Italian painting corresponded to similar stages in the history of the Renaissance. Beginning as the handmaid of the Church, and stimulated by the enthusiasm of the two great popular monastic orders, painting was at first devoted to embodying the thoughts of mediæval Christianity. In proportion as the painters fortified themselves by study of the natural world, their art became more secular. Mysticism gave way to realism. It was felt that much besides religious sentiment was worthy of expression. At the same time, about the year 1440, this process of secularisation was hastened by the influences of the classical revival, renewing an interest in the past life of humanity, and stirring a zeal for science. The painters, on the one hand, now aimed at accurate delineation of actual things: good perspective, correct drawing, sound portraiture, occupied their attention,

<sup>5</sup> A glance at the map shows to what a large extent the Italians owed the progress of their arts to Tuscany. Pisa, as we have already seen, took the lead in sculpture. Florence, at a somewhat later period, revived painting, while Siena contemporaneously developed a style peculiar to herself. This Siennese style—thoroughly Tuscan, though different from that of Florence—exercised an important influence over the schools of Umbria, and gave a peculiar quality to Perugian painting. Through Piero della Francesca, a native of Borgo San Sepolcro, the Florentine tradition was extended to Umbria and the Roman States. Perugia might be even geographically claimed for Tuscany, inasmuch as the Tiber divides the old Etrurian territory from the Umbrians and the duchy of Spoleto. Lionardo was a Tuscan settled as an alien in Milan. Raphael, though a native of Urbino, derived his training from Florence, indirectly through his father and his master Perugino, more immediately from Fra Bartolommeo and Michael Angelo.

to the exclusion of more purely spiritual motives. On the other hand they conceived an admiration for the fragments of the newly discovered antiques, and felt the plastic beauty of Hellenic legends. It is futile to attempt, as M. Rio has done, to prove that this abandonment of the religious sphere of earlier art was for painting a plain decline from good to bad, or to make the more or less of spiritual feeling in a painter's style the test of his degree of excellence; nor can we by any sophistries be brought to believe that the Popes of the fifteenth century were pastoral protectors of solely Christian arts. The truth is, that in the Church, in politics, and in society, the fifteenth century witnessed a sensible decrease of religious fervour, and a very considerable corruption of morality. Painting felt this change; and the secularisation, which was inevitable, passed onward into paganism. Yet the art itself cannot be said to have suffered, when on the threshold of the sixteenth century stand the greatest painters whom the world has known—neither Catholics nor Heathens, but, in their strength of full accomplished art and science, human. After Italy, in the course of that century, had been finally enslaved, then, and not till then, painting suffered from the general depression of the national genius. The great luminaries were extinguished one by one, till none were left but Michael Angelo in Rome, and Tintoret in Venice. The subsequent history of Italian painting is occupied with its revival under the influences of the counter-Reformation, when a new religious sentiment, emasculated and ecstatic, was expressed in company with crude naturalism and cruel sensualism by Bolognese and Neapolitan painters.

I need scarcely repeat the tale of Cimabue's picture, visited by Charles of Anjou, and borne in triumph through the streets with trumpeters, beneath a shower of garlands, to S. Maria Novella.<sup>6</sup> Yet this was the birthday festival of nothing less than what the world now values as Italian painting. In this public act of joy the people of Florence recognised and paid enthusiastic honour to the art arisen among them from the dead. If we rightly consider the matter, it is not a little wonderful that a whole community should thus have hailed the presence in their midst of a new spirit of power and beauty. It proves the widespread sensibility of the Florentines to things of beauty, and shows the sympathy which, emanating from the people, was destined to inspire and brace the artist for his work.<sup>7</sup>

In a dark transept of S. Maria Novella, raised by steps above the level of the church, still hangs this famous 'Madonna' of the Rucellai—not far, perhaps, from the spot where Boccaccio's youths and maidens

<sup>6</sup> If Vasari is to be trusted, this visit of Charles of Anjou to Cimabue's studio took place in 1267; but neither the Malespini nor Villani mention it, and the old belief that the Borgo Allegri owed its name to the popular rejoicing at that time is now somewhat discredited. See Vasari, *Le Monnier*, 1846, vol. i. p. 225, note 4. Gino Capponi, in his *Storia della Repubblica di Firenze*, vol. i. p. 157, refuses however to reject the legend.

<sup>7</sup> See Capponi, vol. i. pp. 59, 78, for a description of the gay and courteous living of the Florentines upon the end of the thirteenth century.



met that Tuesday morning in the year of the great plague; nor far, again, from where the solitary woman, beautiful beyond belief, conversed with Machiavelli on the morning of the first of May in 1527.<sup>8</sup> We who can call to mind the scenes that picture has looked down upon—we who have studied the rise and decadence of painting throughout Italy from this beginning even to the last work of the latest Bolognese—may do well to visit it with reverence, and to ponder on the race of mighty masters whose lineage here takes its origin.

Cimabue did not free his style from what are called Byzantine or Romanesque mannerisms. To unpractised eyes his saints and angels, with their stiff draperies and angular attitudes, though they exhibit stateliness and majesty, belong to the same tribe as the grim mosaics and gaunt frescoes of his predecessors. It is only after careful comparison that we discover, in this picture of the Rucellai for example, a distinctly fresh endeavour to express emotion and to depict life. The outstretched arms of the infant Christ have been copied from nature, not merely borrowed from tradition. The six kneeling angels display variety of attitude suited to several shades of devout affection and adoring service. The head of the Madonna, heavy as it is and conventional in type, still strives to represent maternal affection mingled with an almost melancholy reverence. Prolonging our study, we are led to ask whether the painter might not have painted more freely had he chosen—whether, in fact, he was not bound down to the antique mode of presentation consecrated by devout tradition. This question occurs with even greater force before the wall-paintings ascribed to Cimabue in the church of S. Francis at Assisi.

It remained for Giotto Bondone, born at Vespignano in 1276, just at the date of Niccola Pisano's death, to carry painting in his lifetime even further than the Pisan sculptor had advanced the sister art. Cimabue, so runs a legend luckily not yet discredited, found the child Giotto among the sheep-folds on the solemn Tuscan hill-side, drawing with boyish art the outline of a sheep upon a stone.<sup>9</sup> The master recognised his talent, and took him from his father's cottage to the Florentine *bottega*, much as young Haydn was taken by Reuter to S. Stephen's at Vienna. Gifted with a large and comprehensive intellect, capable of sustained labour, and devoted with the unaffected zeal of a good craftsman to his art, Giotto in the course of his long career filled Italy with work that taught succeeding centuries of painters. As we travel from Padua in the north, where his Arena Chapel sets forth the legend of Mary and the life of Christ in a series of incomparable frescoes, southward to Naples, where he adorned the convent of S. Chiara, we meet with Giotto in almost every city. The 'Passion of our Lord' and

<sup>8</sup> See the *Descrizione della Peste di Firenze*.

<sup>9</sup> I wish I could here transcribe the most beautiful passage from Ruskin's *Giotto and his Works in Padua*, pp. 11, 12, describing the contrast between the landscape of Valdarno and the landscape of the hills of the Mugello district. I can only refer readers to the book, printed for the Arundel Society, 1854.

the 'Allegories of S. Francis' were painted by him at Assisi. S. Peter's at Rome still shows his mosaic of the 'Ship of the Church.' Florence raises his wonderful bell-tower, that lily among campanili, to the sky; and preserves two chapels of S. Croce, illuminated by him with paintings from the stories of S. Francis and S. John. In the chapel of the Podestà he drew the portraits of Dante, Brunetto Latini, and Charles of Valois. And these are but a tithe of his productions. Nothing, indeed, in the history of art is more remarkable than the fertility of this originative genius, no less industrious in labour than fruitful of results for men who followed him. The sound common sense, the genial temper, and the humour of the man, as we learn to know him in tales made current by Vasari and the novelists, help to explain how he achieved so much, with energy so untiring and with excellence so even.

It is no exaggeration to say that Giotto and his scholars, within the space of little more than half a century, painted out upon the walls of the churches and public palaces of Italy every great conception of the Middle Ages. And this they achieved without ascetic formalism, energetically, but always reverently, aiming at expressing life and dramatising Scripture history. The tale told about Giotto's first essay in drawing might be chosen as a parable: he was not found beneath a church roof tracing a mosaic, but on the open mountain, trying to draw the portrait of the living thing committed to his care.

What, therefore, Giotto gave to art was, before all things else, vitality. His Madonnas are no longer symbols of a certain phase of pious awe, but pictures of maternal love. The Bride of God suckles her divine infant with a smile, watches him playing with a bird, or stretches out her arms to take him when he turns crying from the hands of the circumcising priest. By choosing incidents like these from real home-life, Giotto, through his painting, humanised the mysteries of faith, and brought them close to common feeling. Nor was the change less in his method than his motives. Before his day painting had been without composition, without charm of colour, without suggestion of movement or the play of living energy. He first knew how to distribute figures in the given space with perfect balance, and how to mass them together in animated groups agreeable to the eye. He caught varied and transient shades of emotion, and expressed them by the posture of the body and the play of feature. The hues of morning and of evening served him. Of all painters he was most successful in preserving the clearness and the light of pure, well-tempered colours. His power of telling a story by gesture and action is unique in its peculiar simplicity. There are no ornaments or accessories in his pictures. The whole force of the artist has been concentrated on rendering the image of the life conceived by him. Relying on his knowledge of human nature, and seeking only to make his subject intelligible, no painter is more unaffectedly pathetic, more unconsciously majestic. While under the influence of his genius, we are sincerely glad that the requisite science for clever imitation of landscape and architectural backgrounds was not

forthcoming in his age. Art had to go through a toilsome period of geometrical and anatomical pedantry, before it could venture, in the frescoes of Michael Angelo and Raphael, to return with greater wealth of knowledge on a higher level to the divine simplicity of its childhood in Giotto.

In the drawing of the figure Giotto was surpassed by many meaner artists of the fifteenth century. Nor had he that quality of genius which selects a high type of beauty, and is scrupulous to shun the commonplace. The faces of even his most sacred personages are often almost vulgar. In his choice of models for saints and apostles we already trace the Florentine instinct for contemporary portraiture. Yet, though his knowledge of anatomy was defective, and his taste was realistic, Giotto solved the great problem of figurative art far better than more learned and fastidious painters. He never failed to make it manifest that what he meant to represent was living. Even to the non-existent he gave the semblance of reality. We cannot help believing in his angels leaning waist-deep from the blue sky, wringing their hands in agony above the Cross, pacing like deacons behind Christ when He washes the feet of His disciples, or sitting watchful and serene upon the empty sepulchre. He was, moreover, essentially a fresco-painter, working with rapid decision on a large scale, aiming at broad effects, and willing to sacrifice subtlety to clearness of expression. The health of his whole nature and his robust good sense are everywhere apparent in his solid, concrete, human work of art. There is no trace of mysticism, no ecstatic piety, nothing morbid or hysterical, in his imagination. Imbuing whatever he handled with the force and freshness of actual existence, Giotto approached the deep things of the Christian faith and the legend of S. Francis in the spirit of a man bent simply on realising the objects of his belief as facts. His allegories of 'Poverty,' 'Chastity,' and 'Obedience,' at Assisi, are as beautiful and powerfully felt as they are carefully constructed. Yet they conceal no abstruse spiritual meaning, but are plainly painted 'for the poor laity of love to read.' The artist poet who coloured the virginal form of Poverty, with the briars beneath her feet and the roses blooming round her forehead, proved by his well-known *canzone* that he was free from monastic Quixotism, and took a practical view of the value of worldly wealth.<sup>10</sup> His homely humour saved him from the exaltation and the childishness that formed the weakness of the Franciscan revival. By the same firm grasp upon reality he created more than mere abstractions in his *chiaroscuro* figures of the virtues and vices at Padua. Fortitude and Justice, Faith and Envy, are gifted by him with a real corporeal existence. They seem fit to play their parts with other concrete personalities upon the stage of this world's history. Giotto in truth possessed a share of that power which belonged to the Greek sculptors. He embodies myths in physical forms, adequate to their intellectual meaning. This was in part the secret of the in-

<sup>10</sup> See Trucchi, *Poesie Italiane Inedite*, vol. ii. p. 8.

fluence he exercised over the sculptors of the second period;<sup>11</sup> and had the conditions of the age been favourable to such development, some of the allegorical types created by him might have passed into the Pantheon of popular worship as deities incarnate.

The birth of Italian painting is closely connected with the religious life of the Italians. The building of the church of S. Francis at Assisi gave it the first great impulse; and to the piety aroused by S. Francis throughout Italy, but mostly in the valleys of the Apennines, it owed its animating spirit in the fourteenth century. The church of Assisi is double. One structure of nave, and choir, and transept, is imposed upon another; and the walls of both, from floor to coping-stone, are covered with fresco—painted pictures taking here the place occupied by mosaic in such churches as the cathedral of Monreale, or by coloured glass in the northern cathedrals of the pointed style. Many of these frescoes date from years before the birth of Giotto. Giunta the Pisan, Gaddo Gaddi, and Cimabue, are supposed to have worked there, painfully continuing or feebly struggling to throw off the decadent traditions of a dying art. In their school Giotto laboured, and modern painting arose with the movement of new life beneath his brush. Here, pondering in his youth upon the story of Christ's suffering, and in his later manhood on the virtues of S. Francis and his vow, he learned the secret of giving the semblance of flesh and blood reality to Christian thought. His achievement was nothing less than this. The Creation, the Fall, the Redemption of the World, the moral discipline of man, the Judgment, and the final state of bliss or misery—all these he quickened into beautiful and breathing forms. Those were noble days, when the painter had literally acres of walls given him to cover; when the whole belief of Christendom, grasped by his own faith, and firmly rooted in the faith of the people round him, as yet unimpaired by alien emanations from the world of classic culture, had to be set forth for the first time in art. His work was then a Bible, a compendium of grave divinity and human history, a book embracing all things needful for the spiritual and the civil life of man. He spoke to men who could not read, for whom there were no printed pages, but whose heart received his teaching through the eye. Thus painting was not then what it is now, a decoration of existence, but a potent and efficient agent in the education of the race. Such opportunities do not occur twice in the same age. Once in Greece for the pagan world; once in Italy for the modern world;—that must suffice for the education of the human race.

Like Niccolò Pisano, Giotto not only founded a school in his native city, but spread his manner far and wide over Italy, so that the first period of the history of painting is the Giottesque. The Gaddi of Florence, Giotto, Puccio Capanna, the Lorenzetti of Siena, Spinello of Arezzo, Andrea Orcagna, Domenico Veneziano, and the lesser artists of the Pisan Campo Santo, were either formed or influenced by him. To

<sup>11</sup> See above, pp. 643-644.

give an account of the frescoes of these painters would be to describe how the religious, social, and philosophical conceptions of the fourteenth century found complete expression in form and colour. By means of allegory and pictured scene they drew the portrait of the Middle Age in Italy, performing jointly and in combination with the followers of Niccola Pisano what Dante had done singly by his poetry.

It has often been remarked that the drama of the life beyond this world—its prologue in the courts of death, the tragedy of judgment, and the final state of bliss or misery prepared for souls—preoccupied the mind of the Italians at the close of the Middle Ages. Every city had its pictorial representation of the 'Dies Iræ;' and within this framework the artist was free to set forth his philosophy of human nature, adding such touches of satire or admonition as suited his own temper or the circumstances of the place for which he worked. Dante's poem has immortalised this moment of Italian consciousness, when the belief in another world was used to intensify the emotions of this life—when the inscrutable darkness toward which men travel became for them a black and polished mirror reflecting with terrible luminousness the events of the present and the past. So familiar had the Italians become with the theme of death artistically treated, that they did not shrink from acted pageants of the tragedy of Hell. Giovanni Villani tells us that in 1304 the companies and clubs of pleasure, formed for making festival throughout the town of Florence on the 1st of May, contended with each other for the prize of novelty and rarity in sports provided for the people. Among the rest, the Borgo S. Friano had it cried about the streets, that whoso wished for news from the other world, should find himself on Mayday on the bridge Carraja or the neighbouring banks of Arno. And in Arno they contrived stages upon boats and various small craft, and made the semblance and figure of Hell there with flames and other pains and torments, with men dressed as demons horrible to see; and others had the shape of naked souls; and these they gave unto those divers tortures with exceeding great crying and groaning and confusion, the which seemed hateful and appalling unto eyes and ears. The novelty of the sport drew many citizens, and the bridge Carraja, then of wood, was so crowded that it brake in several places and fell with the folk upon it, whereby were many killed and drowned, and many were disabled; and as the crier had proclaimed, so now in death went much folk to learn news of the other world.'

Such being the temper of the people, we find that some of the greatest works of art in this age were paintings of Death and Hell, Heaven and Judgment. Orcagna, in the Strozzi Chapel of S. Maria Novella, set forth these scenes with a wonderful blending of beauty and grotesque invention. In the treatment of the Inferno he strove to delineate the whole geography of Dante's first *cantica*, tracing the successive circles and introducing the various episodes commemorated by the poet. Interesting as this work may be for the illustration of the 'Divine Comedy' as understood by Dante's immediate successors, we turn from it with a

sense of relief to admire the saints and angels ranged in goodly row, 'each burning upward to his point of bliss,' whereby the painter has depicted Paradise. Early Italian art has nothing more truly beautiful to offer than the white-robed Madonna kneeling at the judgment seat of Christ.<sup>12</sup>

It will be felt by every genuine student of art that if Orcagna painted these frescoes in S. Maria Novella, whereof there is no doubt, he could not have executed the wall-paintings in the Campo Santo at Pisa attributed to him by Vasari. To what artists or artist we owe those three grave and awful panels, may still be regarded an open question.<sup>13</sup> At the end of the southern wall of the cemetery, exposed to a cold and equal north light from the cloister windows, these great compositions, after the lapse of five centuries, bring us face to face with the most earnest thoughts of mediæval Christianity. Their main purpose seems to be to illustrate the advantage of the ascetic over the secular mode of life, and to school men into living with the fear of death before their eyes. The first displays the solitary vigils, self-imposed penances, cruel temptations, firm endurance, and beatific visions of the anchorites in the Thebaid. The second is devoted to the triumph of Death over the pomp, strength, wealth, and beauty of the world. The third reveals a grimly realistic and yet awfully imaginative vision of judgment, such as it has rarely been granted to a painter to conceive. Thus to the awakening soul of the Italians, on the threshold of the modern era, with the sonnets of Petrarch and the stories of Boccaccio sounding in their memories, this terrible master presented the three saddest phantoms of the Middle Ages—the spectre of death omnipotent, the solitude of the desert as the only refuge from a sinful and doomed world, the dread of Divine justice inexorable and inevitable. In those piles of the promiscuous and abandoned dead, those fiends and angels poised in mid-air struggling for souls, those blind and mutilated beggars vainly besieging

<sup>12</sup> The wonderful beauty of Orcagna's faces, profile after profile laid together like lilies in a garden border, can only be discovered after long study. It has been my good fortune to examine, through the kindness of Mrs. Higford Burr, of Aldermaston, a large series of tracings, taken chiefly by the Right Hon. A. H. Layard, from the frescoes of Giottoesque and other early masters, which, by the selection of simple form in outline, demonstrate not only the grand composition of these religious paintings, but also the incomparable loveliness of their types. How great the *Trecentisti* were as draughtsmen, how imaginative was the beauty of their conception, can be best appreciated by thus artificially separating their design from their colouring. The semblance of archaism disappears, and leaves a vision of pure beauty, delicate and spiritual. The collection to which I have alluded was made some years ago, when access to the wall-paintings of Italy for the purpose of tracing was still possible. It includes nearly the whole of Lorenzetti's work in the Sala della Pace, much of Giotto, the Gozzoli frescoes at S. Gimignano, frescoes of the Veronese masters and of the Paduan Baptistery, a great deal of Piero della Francesca, Mantegna, Luini, Gaudenzio Ferrari, Pinturicchio, Masolino, &c. The earliest masters of Arezzo, Pisa, Siena, Urbino are copiously illustrated, while few burghs or hamlets of the Tuscan and Umbrian districts have been left unvisited.

<sup>13</sup> See Crowe and Cavalcaselle, vol. i. pp. 445-451, for a discussion of the question. They incline to the authorship of Pietro and Ambrogio Lorenzetti. But the last Florentine edition of Vasari renders this opinion doubtful.

Death with prayers and imprecations for deliverance, while she descends in her robe of woven wire to mow down with her scythe the knights and ladies in their garden of delight; again in those horses snuffing at the open graves, those countesses and princes face to face with skeletons, those serpents coiling round the flesh of what was once fair youth or maid, those multitudes of guilty men and women trembling beneath the trump of the archangel—tearing their cheeks, their hair, their breasts in agony, because they see Hell through the prison-bars, and hear the raging of its fiends, and feel the clasp upon their wrists and ankles of clawed hairy demon hands; in all this terrific amalgamation of sinister and tragic ideas, vividly presented, full of coarse dramatic power, and intensified by faith in their material reality, the Lorenzetti brethren, if theirs be indeed the hands that painted here, summed up the nightmares of the Middle Age and bequeathed an ever-memorable picture of its desolate preoccupations to the rising world. They have called to their aid poetry, and history, and legend. Boccaccio supplies them with the garden scene of youths and damsels dancing among roses, while the plague is at their gates, and death is in the air above. From Petrarch they have borrowed the form and mystic robe of Death herself.<sup>14</sup> Ugucione della Faggiuola has sat for the portrait of the Captain who must quail before the terrors of the tomb, and Castruccio Castracane is the strong man cut off in the blossom of his age. The prisons of the Visconti have disgorged their victims, cast adrift with maiming that makes life unendurable but does not hasten death.<sup>15</sup> The lazar houses and the charnels have been ransacked for forms of grisly decay. Thus the whole work is not merely 'an hieroglyphical and shadowed lesson' of ascetic philosophy; it is also a realisation of mediæval life in its cruellest intensity and most uncompromising truth. For mere beauty these painters had but little regard.<sup>16</sup> Their distribution of the subjects chosen for treatment on each panel shows, indeed, a keen sense for the value of dramatic contrast and a masterly power of varying while combining the composition. Their chief aim, however, is to produce the utmost realism of effect, to translate the poignancy of passion, the dread certainty of doom, into forms of unmistakable fidelity. Therefore they do not shrink from prosaic and revolting details. The knight who has to hold his nose above the open grave, the lady who presses her cheek against her hand with a spasm of distress, the horse who pricks his ears and snorts with open nostrils, the grooms who start aside like

<sup>14</sup> Ed una donna involta in veste negra,  
Con un furor qual io non so se mai  
Al tempo de' giganti fosse a Flegra.

*Trionfo della Morte*, cap. i. 31.

<sup>15</sup> On a scroll above these wretches is written this legend:—

Dacchè prosperidade ci ha lasciati,  
O morte, medicina d' ogni pena,  
Deh vieni a darne omai l' ultima cena.

<sup>16</sup> This might be used as an argument against the Lorenzetti hypothesis; for their work at Siena is eminently beautiful.



savage creatures, all suggest the loathsomeness of death, its physical repulsiveness. In the 'Last Judgment' the same kind of dramatic force is used to heighten a sublime conception. The crouching attitude and the shrouded face of the Archangel Raphael, whose eyes alone are visible above the hand that he has thrust forth from his cloak to hide the grief he feels, prove more emphatically than any less realistic motive could have done, how terrible, even for the cherubic beings to whose guardianship the human race has been assigned, will be the trumpet of the wrath of God.<sup>17</sup> Studying these frescoes, we cannot but reflect what nerves, what brains, what hearts encased in triple brass the men who thought and felt thus must have possessed. They make us comprehend not merely the stern and savage temper of the Middle Ages, but the intense and fiery ebullition of the Renaissance, into which, as by a sudden liberation, so much imprisoned pent-up force was driven.

A different but scarcely less important phase of mediæval thought is imaged in the frescoes of the Cappella degli Spagnuoli in S. Maria Novella.<sup>18</sup> Dogmatic theology is here in the ascendant. While S. Francis bequeathed a legend of singular suavity and beauty, overflowing with the milk of charity and mildness, to the Church, S. Dominic assumed the attitude of the saint militant and orthodox. Dante's words about him—

L'amoroso drudo<sup>19</sup>  
Della fede Cristiana, il santo atleta,  
Benigno a' suoi, ed a' nemici crudo,

omit nothing that is needed to characterise the impression produced upon the Christian world by this remorseless foe of heresy, this champion of the faith who dealt in butcheries and burnings. S. Francis taught love; S. Dominic taught wrath: and both, perhaps, were needed for the safety of the mediæval Church—the one by resuscitating the

<sup>17</sup> The attitude and the eyes of this archangel have an imaginative potency beyond that of any other motive used by any painter to suggest the terror of the *Dies Ira*. Simplicity and truth of vision in the artist have here touched the very summit of intense dramatic presentation.

<sup>18</sup> The 'Triumph of S. Thomas Aquinas,' in this cloister-chapel, has long been declared the work of Taddeo Gaddi. 'The Triumph of the Church Militant,' and the 'Consecration of S. Dominic,' used to be ascribed, on the faith of Vasari, to Simone Martini of Siena. Independently of its main subject, this vast wall-painting is specially interesting on account of its portraits. The work has a decidedly Siennese character; but recent critics are inclined to assign it to a certain Andrea, of Florence. See Crowe and Cavalcaselle, vol. ii. p. 89. The same critics doubt the hand of Taddeo Gaddi in the 'Triumph of S. Thomas,' vol. i. p. 374, and remark that 'these productions of the art of the fourteenth century are, indeed, second-class works, executed by pupils of the Siennese and Florentine school, and unworthy of the high praise which has ever been given to them.' Whatever may be ultimately thought about the question of their authorship and pictorial merit, their interest to the student of Italian painting in relation to mediæval thought will always remain indisputable. Few buildings in the length and breadth of Italy possess such claims on our attention as the Capella degli Spagnuoli.

<sup>19</sup> The amorous fere of the Christian faith, the holy athlete, gentle to his own, and to his foes cruel.

spirit of the Gospels, the other by resisting the intrusion of 'alien ideals ere the time for their triumph had arrived. What the painters of these frescoes undertook to delineate for the Dominicans of Florence, was the fabric of society sustained and held together by the action of inquisitors and doctors issued from their order. The Pope with his Cardinals, the Emperor with his Council, represent the two chief forces of Christendom, as conceived by the mediæval jurists and the school of Dante. Seated on thrones, they are ready to rise in defence of Holy Church, symbolised by a picture of S. Maria del Fiore. At their feet the black and white hounds of the Dominican order—*Domini canes*, according to the monkish pun—are hunting heretical wolves. Opposite this painting is the apotheosis of S. Thomas Aquinas. Beneath the footstool of this 'dumb ox of Sicily,' as he was called, grovel the heresiarchs—Arius, Sabellius, Averroes. At again a lower level, as though supporting the saint on either hand, are ranged seven sacred and seven profane sciences, each with its chief representative. Thus Rhetoric and Cicero, Civil Law and Justinian, Speculative Theology and the Areopagite, Practical Theology and Peter Lombard, Geometry and Euclid, Arithmetic and Abraham, are grouped together. It will be seen that the whole learning of the Middle Age—its philosophy as well as its divinity—is here combined as in a figured abstract, for the wise to comment on and for the simple to peruse. None can avoid drawing the lesson that knowledge exists for the service of the Church, and that the Church, while she instructs society, will claim complete obedience to her decrees. The *ipse dixit* of the Dominican author of the 'Summa' is law.

Such frescoes, by no means uncommon in Dominican cloisters, still retain great interest for the student of scholastic thought. In the church of S. Maria Sopra Minerva at Rome, where Galileo was afterwards compelled to sign his famous retraction, Filippino Lippi painted another triumph of S. Thomas, conceived in the spirit of Taddeo Gaddi's, but expressed with the freedom of the middle Renaissance. Nor should we neglect to notice the remarkable picture by Traini in S. Caterina at Pisa. Here the doctor of Aquino is represented in an aureole surrounded by a golden sphere or disc, on the edge of which are placed the four evangelists, together with Moses and S. Paul.<sup>20</sup> At his side, within the burnished sphere, Plato and Aristotle stand upright, holding the 'Timæus' and the 'Ethics' in their hands. Christ in glory is above the group, emitting from His mouth three rays upon the head of S. Thomas. Single rays descend in like manner upon the evangelists and Moses and S. Paul. They, like Plato and Aristotle, hold open books; and rays from these eight volumes converge upon the head of the angelical doctor, who becomes the focus, as it were, of all the beams sent forth from Christ and from the classic teachers, whether directly effused or transmitted

<sup>20</sup> Everything outside this golden region is studded with stars to signify an *ἐπουράνιος τόπος*, or heaven of heavens. S. Thomas and the Greeks are inside the golden sphere of science, and below on earth are the heresiarchs and faithful. Rosini gives a faithful outline of this picture in his *Atlas of Illustrations*.

through the writers of the Bible. S. Thomas lastly holds a book open in his hand, and carries others on his lap; while lines of light are shed from these upon two bands of the faithful, chiefly Dominican monks, arranged on each side of his footstool. Averroes lies prostrate beneath his feet with his book face downwards, lightning-smitten by a shaft from the leaves of the volume in the saint's hand, whereon is written: *veritatem meditabitur guttur meum et labia mea detestabuntur impium*.<sup>21</sup>

This picture, afterwards repeated by Benozzo Gozzoli with some change in the persons,<sup>22</sup> has been minutely described, because it is important to bear in mind the measure of inspiration conceded by the mediæval Church to the fathers of Greek philosophy, and her utter detestation of the peripatetic traditions transmitted through the Arabic by Averroes. Averroes, though Dante placed him with the great souls of pagan civilisation in the first circle of Inferno,<sup>23</sup> was regarded as the protagonist of infidelity. The myth of incredulity that gathered round his memory and made him hated in the Middle Ages, has been traced with exquisite delicacy by Renan,<sup>24</sup> who shows that his name became a rallying point for freethinkers. Scholars like Petrarch were eager to confute his sect, and artists used him as a symbol of materialistic disbelief. Thus we meet with Averroes among the lost souls in the Pisan Campo Santo, distinguished as usual by his turban and long beard. On the other hand, the frank acceptance of pagan philosophy, insofar as it could be accommodated to the doctrine of the Church, finds full expression in the art of this early period. On the walls of the Palazzo Pubblico at Siena were painted the figures of Curius Dentatus and Cato,<sup>25</sup> while the pavement of the Duomo showed Hermes Trismegistus instructing both a pagan and a Christian, and Socrates ascending the steep hill of virtue. Perugino, some years later, decorated the Sala del Cambio at Perugia with the heroes, philosophers, and worthies of the ancient world. We are thus led by a gradual progress up to the final achievement of Raphael in the Vatican. Separating the antique from the Christian tradition, but placing them upon an equality in his art, Raphael made the 'School of Athens' an epitome of Greek and Roman wisdom, while in the 'Dispute of the Sacrament' he symbolised the Church in heaven and Church on earth.

Another class of ideas, no less illustrative of mediævalism, can be studied in the Palazzo Pubblico at Siena. There, on the walls of the

<sup>21</sup> 'For my mouth shall speak truth; and wickedness is an abomination to my lips.'  
—Prov. viii 7.

<sup>22</sup> Gozzoli's picture is now in the Louvre. I think Guillaume de Saint Amour takes the place of Averroes.

<sup>23</sup> *Inf.* iv. 144.

<sup>24</sup> *Averroès et l'Averroïsme*, pp. 236-316.

<sup>25</sup> In the chapel. They are the work of Taddeo di Bartolo, and bear this inscription: 'Specchiatevi in costoro, voi che reggete.' The mediæval painters of Italy learned lessons of civility and government as willingly from classical tradition, as they deduced the lessons of piety and godly living from the Bible. Herein they were akin to Dante, who chose Virgil for the symbol of the human understanding and Beatrice for the symbol of divine wisdom, revealed to man in Theology.

Sala della Pace or de' Nove, may be seen the frescoes whereby Ambrogio Lorenzetti expressed theories of society and government peculiar to his age.<sup>26</sup> The panels are three in number. In the first the painter has delineated the Commune of Siena by an imperial male figure in the prime of life, throned on a judgment-seat, holding a sceptre in his right hand and a medallion of Justice in his left.<sup>27</sup> He wears no coronet, but a burgher's cap; and beneath his footstool are the Roman twins, suckled by the she-wolf.<sup>28</sup> Above his head in the air float Faith, Charity, and Hope—the Christian virtues; while Justice, Temperance, Magnanimity, Prudence, Fortitude, and Peace, six women, crowned, and with appropriate emblems, are enthroned beside him. The majestic giant of the Commune towers above them all in bulk and stature, as though to indicate the people's sovereignty. The virtues are his assessors and inspirers—he is King. Beneath the dais occupied by these supreme personages are ranged on either hand mailed and visored cavaliers, mounted on chargers, the guardians of the State. All the citizens in their degrees advance toward the throne, carrying between them, pair by pair, a rope received from the hands of Concord; while some who have transgressed her laws, are being brought with bound hands to the judgment-seat. Concord herself, being less the virtue of the government than of the governed, is seated on a line with the burghers in a place apart beneath the throne of Civil Justice, who is allegorised as the dispenser of rewards and punishments, as well as controller of the armed force and the purse of the community. The whole of this elaborate allegory suffers by the language of description. Those who have seen it, and who are familiar with Sienese chronicles, feel that, artistically laboured as the painter's work may be, every figure had a passionate and intense meaning for him.<sup>29</sup> His picture is the epitome of government conducted by a sovereign people. Nor can we fail to be struck with the beauty of some details. The pale earnest faces of the horsemen are eminently chivalrous, with knightly honour written on their calm and fearless features. Peace, reclining at ease upon her pillow, is a lovely woman in loose raiment, her hair wreathed with blossoms, in her hand an olive branch, her feet reposing upon casque and shield. She is like a painted statue, making us wonder whether the artist had not copied her from the 'Aphrodite' of Lysippus,

<sup>26</sup> He began his work in 1337.

<sup>27</sup> A similar mode of symbolising the Commune is chosen in the bas-reliefs of Archbishop Tarlati's tomb at Arezzo, where the discord of the city is represented by an old man of gigantic stature, throned and maltreated by the burghers, who are tearing out his hair by handfuls. Over this figure is written 'Il Comune Pelato.'

<sup>28</sup> These were adopted as the ensign of Siena, in the Middle Ages.

<sup>29</sup> In the year 1336, just before Ambrogio began to paint, the Sienese Republic had concluded a league with Florence for the maintenance of the Guelph party. The Monte de' Nove still ruled the city with patriotic spirit and equity, and had not yet become a forceful oligarchy. The power of the Visconti was still in its cradle; the great plague had not devastated Tuscany. As early as 1355 the whole of the fair order represented by Ambrogio was shaken to the foundation, and Siena deserved the words applied to it by De Comines. See *Age of the Despots*, p. 105, note 14.

ere the Sienese destroyed this statue in their dread of paganism.<sup>30</sup>

In the other two panels of this hall Ambrogio Lorenzetti painted the contrast of good and bad government, harmony and discord. A city full of brawls and bloodshed is set in opposition to one where the dance and viol do not cease. Merchants are plundered as they issue from the gates on one side; on the other, trains of sumpter mules are securely winding along mountain paths. Tyranny, with all the vices for his council and with Terror for prime minister, presides over the ill-governed town. The burghers of the happy commune follow trade or pleasure, as they list; a beautiful winged genius, inscribed 'Securitas,' floats above their citadel. It should be added that in both these pictures the architecture is the same; for the painter has designed to teach how different may be the state of one and the same city according to its form of government. Such then were the vivid images whereby Ambrogio Lorenzetti expressed the mediæval curse of discord, and the ideal of a righteous rule. It is only necessary to read the 'Diario Sanese' of Allegretto Allegretti in order to see that he drew no fancy picture. The torchlight procession of burghers swearing amity by couples in the cathedral there described, receives exact pictorial illustration in the fresco of the Sala della Pace.<sup>31</sup> Siena, by her bloody factions and her passionate peacemakings, expressed in daily action what the painter had depicted on her palace walls.

The method of treatment adopted for these chapters has obliged me to give priority to Florence, and to speak of the two Lorenzetti, Pietro in the Pisan Campo Santo and Ambrogio in the Sala della Pace at Siena, as though they were followers of Giotto; so true is it that the main currents of Tuscan art were governed by Florentine influences, and that Giotto's genius made itself felt in all the work of his immediate successors. It must, however, be observed that painting had an independent origin among the Sienese, and that Guido da Siena may claim to rank even earlier than Cimabue.<sup>32</sup> In the year 1260, just before engaging in their duel with Florence, the Sienese dedicated their city to the Virgin; and the victory of Montaperti, following immediately upon this vow, gave a marked impulse to their piety.<sup>33</sup> The early masters of Siena devoted themselves to religious paintings, especially to pictures of Madonna suited for chapels and oratories. We find upon these mystic panels an ecstasy of adoration and a depth of fervour which are alien to the more sober spirit of Florence, combined with an almost infantine delight in pure bright colours, and in the decorative details of the miniaturist.

<sup>30</sup> Rio, perversely bent on stigmatising whatever in Italian art savours of the Renaissance, depreciates this lovely form of Peace. *L'Art Chrétien*, vol. i. p. 57.

<sup>31</sup> See Muratori, vol. xxiii., or the passage translated by me in *Age of the Despots*, p. 312.

<sup>32</sup> His 'Madonna' in S. Domenico is dated 1221. For a full discussion of Guido da Siena's date, see Crowe and Cavalcaselle, vol. i. pp. 180-185.

<sup>33</sup> On their coins the Sienese struck this legend: 'Sena vetus Civitas Virginis.' It will be remembered how the Florentines, two centuries and a half later, dedicated their city to Christ as king.

The first great painter among the Sienese was Duccio di Buoninsegna.<sup>34</sup> The completion of his masterpiece—a picture of the Majesty of the Virgin, executed for the high altar of the Duomo—marked an epoch in the history of Siena. Nearly two years had been spent upon it; the painter receiving sixteen soldi a day from the Commune, together with his materials, in exchange for his whole time and skill and labour. At last, on June 9, 1310, it was carried from Duccio's workshop to its place in the cathedral. A procession was formed by the clergy, with the archbishop at their head, followed by the magistrates of the Commune, and the chief men of the Monte de' Nove. These great folk crowded round their Lady; after came a multitude of burghers bearing tapers; while the rear was brought up by women and children. The bells rang and trumpets blew as this new image of the Sovereign Mistress of Siena was borne along the summer-smiling streets of her metropolis to take its throne in her high temple. Duccio's altar-piece presented on one face to the spectator a Virgin seated with the infant Christ upon her lap, and receiving the homage of the patron saints of Siena. On the other, he depicted the principal scenes of the Gospel story and the Passion of our Lord in twenty-eight compartments. What gives peculiar value to this elaborate work of Sienese art is, that in it Duccio managed to combine the tradition of an early hieratic style of painting with all the charm of brilliant colouring and with dramatic force of presentation only rivalled at that time by Giotto. Independently of Giotto, he performed at a stroke what Cimabue and his pupil had achieved for the Florentines, and bequeathed to the succeeding painters of Siena a tradition of art beyond which they rarely passed.

Far more than their neighbours at Florence, the Sienese remained fettered by the technical methods and the pietistic formulæ of the earliest religious painting. To make their conventional representations of Madonna's love and woe and glory burn with all the passion of a fervent spirit, and to testify their worship by the oblation of rich gifts in colouring and gilding massed around her, was their earnest aim. It followed that, when they attempted subjects on a really large scale, the faults of the miniaturist clung about them. I need hardly say that Ambrogio and Pietro Lorenzetti form notable exceptions to this general statement. It may be applied, however, with some truth to Simone Martini, the painter, who during his lifetime enjoyed a celebrity only second to that of Giotto.<sup>35</sup> Like Giotto, Simone exercised his art in many parts of Italy. Siena, Pisa, Assisi, Orvieto, Naples, and Avignon

<sup>34</sup> Date of birth unknown; date of death, about 1320.

<sup>35</sup> He is better known as Simone Memmi, a name given to him by a mistake of Vasari's. He was born in 1283 at Siena. He died in 1344 at Avignon. Petrarch mentions his portrait of Madonna Laura, in the 49th and 50th sonnets of the 'Rime in Vita di Madonna Laura.' In another place he uses these words about Simone: 'Duos ego novi pictores egregios, nec formosos, Jottum Florentinum civem, cujus inter modernos fama ingens est, et Simonem Senensem.'—*Epist. Fam.* lib. v. 17, p. 653. Petrarch proceeds to mention that he has also known sculptors, and asserts their inferiority to painters in modern times.

can still boast of wall and easel pictures from his hand; and though it has been suggested that he took no part in the decoration of the Cappella degli Spagnuoli, the impress of his manner remains at Florence in those noble frescoes of the 'Church Militant' and the 'Consecration of S. Dominic.'<sup>36</sup> Simone's first undisputed works are to be seen at Siena and at Assisi, where we learn what he could do as a *frescante* in competition with the ablest Florentines. In the Palazzo Pubblico of his native city he painted a vast picture of the Virgin enthroned beneath a canopy and surrounded by saints;<sup>37</sup> while at Assisi he put forth his whole power in portraying the legend of S. Martin. In all his paintings we trace the skill of an exquisite and patient craftsman, elaborately careful to finish his work with the utmost refinement, sensitive to feminine beauty, full of delicate inventiveness, and gifted with a rare feeling for grace. These excellent qualities tend, however, towards affectation and over-softness; nor are they fortified by such vigour of conception or such majesty in composition as belong to the greatest *trecentisti*. The Lorenzetti alone soared high above the Sienese mannerism into a region of masculine imaginative art. We feel Simone's charm mostly in single heads and detached figures, some of which at Assisi have incomparable sweetness. 'Molles Senæ,' the delicate and femininely variable, fond of all things brilliant, and unstable through defect of sternness, was the fit mother of this ingenious and delightful master.

After the days of Duccio and Simone Martini, of Ambrogio and Pietro Lorenzetti, were over, there remained but little for the Sienese to do in painting. Taddeo di Bartolo continued the tradition of Duccio, as the later Giottesques continued that of Giotto. His most remarkable wall-painting is a fresco of the Apostles visiting the Virgin, the motive of which is marked by great originality.<sup>38</sup> Our Lady is seated in an open loggia with a company of holy men and women round her. Descending from the sky and floating through the arches are three of the Apostles, while one who has just alighted from his aerial transit kneels and folds his hands in adoration. Seldom have the longing and the peace of loving worship been more poetically expressed than here. The seated, kneeling, standing, and flying figures are admirably grouped together; their draperies are dignified and massive; and the architectural accessories help the composition by dividing it into three balanced sections.

Such power of depicting movement was rare in the fourteenth century. To find its analogue, we must betake ourselves to the frescoes of Spinello Aretino, a master more decidedly Giottesque than his con-

<sup>36</sup> See above, p. 681. Messrs. Crowe and Cavalcaselle reject, not without reason, as it seems to me, the tradition that Simone painted the frescoes of S. Ranieri in the Campo Santo at Pisa. See vol. ii. p. 83. What remains of his work at Pisa is an altar-piece in S. Caterina.

<sup>37</sup> To Simone is also attributed the interesting portrait of Guidoriccio Fogliani de' Ricci, on horseback, in the Sala del Consiglio. This, however, has been so much repainted as to have lost its character.

<sup>38</sup> In S. Francesco at Pisa.



temporary Taddeo di Bartolo.<sup>39</sup> A Gabriel, rushing down from heaven to salute Madonna, with all the whirr of arch-angelic pinions and the glory of Paradise around him, is a fine specimen of Spinello's vehemence. The same quality, more tempered, is noticeable in his frescoes of the legend of S. Ephesus at Pisa.<sup>40</sup> Few faces in the paintings of any period are more fascinating than the profiles under steel-blue battle-caps of that godlike pair—the knightly saint and the Archangel Michael—breaking by the irresistible force of their onset and their calm youthful beauty through the mailed ranks of the Sardinian pagans. Spinello was essentially a warlike painter; among the best of his compositions may be named the series of pictures from the history of the Venetian campaign against Frederick Barbarossa.<sup>41</sup> It is a pity that the war of liberation carried on by the Lombard communes with the Empire should have left but little trace on Italian art; and therefore these paintings of Spinello, in addition to their intrinsic merit, have rare historical interest. Delighting in the gleam of armour and the shock of speared warriors, Spinello communicated something of this fiery spirit even to his saints. The monks of Samminiato near Florence employed him in 1388 to paint their newly-finished sacristy with the legend of S. Benedict. In the execution of this task Spinello displayed his usual grandeur and vigour, treating the grey-robed brethren of Monte Cassino like veritable champions of a militant Church. When he died in 1410, it might have been truly said that the flame of the torch kindled by Giotto was at last extinguished.

The student of history cannot but notice with surprise that a city famed like Siena for its vanity, its factious quarrels, and its delicate living, should have produced an almost passionately ardent art of piety.<sup>42</sup> The same reflections are suggested at Perugia, torn by the savage feuds of the Oddi and Baglioni, at warfare with Assisi, reduced to exhaustion by the discords of jealous parties, yet memorable in the history of painting as the head-quarters of the pietistic Umbrian school. The contradiction is, however, in both cases more apparent than real. The people both of Siena and Perugia were highly impressible and emotional, quick to obey the promptings of their passion, whether it took the form of hatred or of love, of spiritual fervour or of carnal violence. Yielding at one moment to the preachings of S. Bernardino, at another to the persuasions of Grifonetto degli Baglioni, the Perugians won the character of being fiends or angels according to the temper of their leaders; while Siena might boast with equal right of having given birth to S. Catherine and nurtured Beccadelli. The religious feeling was a

<sup>39</sup> Spinello degli Spinelli was born of a Ghibelline family, exiled from Florence, who settled at Arezzo, about 1308. He died at Arezzo in 1410, aged 92, according to some computations.

<sup>40</sup> South wall of the Campo Santo, on the left-hand of the entrance.

<sup>41</sup> In the Sala di Balia of the public palace at Siena.

<sup>42</sup> See *Inferno*, xxix. 121; the sonnets on the months by Cene dalla Chitarra, *Poeti del Primo Secolo*, vol. ii. pp. 196-207; the epithet 'Molles Senæ,' given by Beccadelli; and the remarks of De Comines.

passion with them on a par with all the other movements of their quick and mobile temperament: it needed ecstatic art for its interpretation. What was cold and sober would not satisfy the men of these two cities. The Florentines, more justly balanced, less abandoned to the frenzies of impassioned impulse, less capable of feeling the rapt exaltation of the devotee, expressed themselves in art distinguished for its intellectual power, its sanity, its scientific industry, its adequacy to average human needs. Therefore, Florentine influences determined the course of painting in Central Italy. Therefore Giotto, who represented the Florentine genius in the fourteenth century, set his stamp upon the Lorenzetti. The mystic painters of Umbria and Siena have their high and honoured place in the history of Italian art. They supply an element which, except in the work of Fra Angelico, was defective at Florence; but to the Florentines was committed the great charge of interpreting the spirit of Italian civilisation in all its branches, not for the cloister only, or the oratory, but for humanity at large, through painting.

Giotto and his followers, then, in the fourteenth century painted, as we have seen, the religious, philosophical, and social conceptions of their age. As artists, their great discovery was the secret of depicting life. The ideas they expressed belonged to the Middle Ages. But by their method and their spirit they anticipated the Renaissance. In executing their work upon the walls of palaces and churches, they employed a kind of fresco. Fresco was essentially the Florentine vehicle of expression. Among the peoples of Central Italy it took the place of mosaic in Sicily, Ravenna, and Venice, as the means of communicating ideas by forms to the unlettered laity, and as affording to the artist the widest and the freest sphere for the expression of his thoughts.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>43</sup> I have not thought it necessary to distinguish between *tempera* and *fresco*. In *tempera* painting the colours were mixed with egg, gum, and other vehicles dissolved in water, and laid upon a dry ground. In *fresco* painting the colors, mixed only with water, were laid upon plaster while still damp. The latter process replaced the former for wall-paintings in the fourteenth century.

## CHAPTER V

### PAINTING

*Mediæval motives exhausted—New Impulse toward Technical Perfection—Naturalists in Painting—Intermediate Achievement needed for the Great Age of Art—Positive Spirit of the Fifteenth Century—Masaccio—The Modern Manner—Paolo Uccello—Perspective—Realistic Painters—The Model—Piero della Francesca—His Study of Form—Resurrection at Borgo San Sepolcro—Melozzo da Forlì—Squarcione at Padua—Gentile da Fabriano—Fra Angelico—Benozzo Gozzoli—His Decorative Style—Lippo Lippi—Frescoes at Prato and Spoleto—Filippino Lippi—Sandro Botticelli—His value for the Student of Renaissance Fancy—His feeling for Mythology—Piero di Cosimo—Domenico Ghirlandajo—In what sense he sums up the Age—Prosaic Spirit—Florence hitherto supreme in Painting—Extension of Art activity throughout Italy—Medicean Patronage.*

AFTER the splendid outburst of painting in the first half of the fourteenth century, there came a lull. The thoughts and sentiments of mediæval Italy had been now set forth in art. The sincere and simple style of Giotto was worked out. But the new culture of the Revival had not as yet sufficiently penetrated the Italians for the painters to express it; nor had they mastered the technicalities of their craft in such a manner as to render the delineation of more complex forms of beauty possible. The years between 1400 and 1470 may be roughly marked out as the second period of great activity in painting. At this time sculpture, under the hands of Ghiberti, Donatello, and Luca della Robbia, had reached a higher point than the sister art. The debt the sculptors owed to Giotto, they now repaid in full measure to his successors, in obedience to the law whereby sculpture, though subordinated, as in Italy, to painting, is more precocious in its evolution. One of the most marked features of this period was the progress in the art of design, due to bronze modelling and bas-relief; for the painters, labouring in the workshops of the goldsmiths and the stone-carvers, learned how to study the articulation of the human body, to imitate the nude, and to aim by means of graduated light and dark at rendering the effect of roundness in their drawing. The laws of perspective and foreshortening were worked out by Paolo Uccello and Brunelleschi. New methods of colouring were attempted by the Peselli and the Pollajuoli. Abandoning the conventional treatment of religious themes, the artists began to take delight in motives drawn from everyday experience. It became the fashion to introduce contemporary costumes, striking portraits, and familiar incidents into sacred subjects, so that many pictures of this period, though worthless to the student of religious art, are in-

teresting for their illustration of Florentine custom and character. At the same time the painters began to imitate landscape and architecture, loading the background of their frescoes with pompous vistas of palaces and city towers, or subordinating their figures to fantastic scenery of wood and rock and seashore. Many were naturalists, delighting, like Gentile da Fabriano, in the delineation of field flowers and living creatures, or, like Piero di Cosimo, in the portrayal of things rare and curious. Gardens please their eyes, and birds and beasts and insects. Whole menageries and aviaries, for instance, were painted by Paolo Uccello. Others, again, abandoned the old ground of Christian story for the tales of Greece and Rome; and not the least charming products of the time are antique motives treated with the freshness of romantic feeling. We look in vain for the allegories of the Giottesque masters: that stage of thought has been traversed, and a new cycle of poetic ideas, fanciful, idyllic, corresponding to Boiardo's episodes rather than to Dante's vision, opens for the artist. Instead of seeking to set forth vast subjects with the equality of mediocrity, like the Gaddi, or to invent architectonic compositions embracing the whole culture of their age, like the Lorenzetti, the painters were now bent upon realising some special quality of beauty, expressing some fantastic motive, or solving some technical problem of peculiar difficulty. They had, in fact, outgrown the childhood of their art; and while they had not yet attained to mastery, had abandoned the impossible task of making it the medium of universal expression. In this way the manifold efforts of the workers in the first half of the fifteenth century prepared the ground for the great painters of the Golden Age. It remained for Raphael and his contemporaries to achieve the final synthesis of art in masterpieces of consummate beauty. But this they could not have done without the aid of those innumerable intermediate labourers, whose productions occupy in art the place of Bacon's *media axiomata* in science. Remembering this, we ought not to complain that the purpose of painting at this epoch was divided, or that its achievements were imperfect. The whole intellectual conditions of the country were those of growth, experiment, preparation, and acquisition, rather than of full accomplishment. What happened in the field of painting, was happening also in the field of scholarship; and we have good reason to be thankful that by the very nature of the arts, these tentative endeavours have a more enduring charm than the dull tomes of contemporary students. Nor, again, is it rational to regret that painting, having started with the sincere desire of expressing the hopes and fears that agitate the soul of man, and raise him to a spiritual region, should now be occupied with lessons in perspective and anatomy. In the twofold process of discovering the world and man, this dry ground had inevitably to be explored, and its exploration could not fail to cost the sacrifice of much that was impassioned and imaginative in the earlier and less scientific age of art.<sup>1</sup> The spirit of Cosimo de' Medici, almost cynical in its positivism, the

<sup>1</sup> See *Age of the Despots*, p. 10.

spirit of Sixtus IV., almost godless in its egotism, were abroad in Italy at this period;<sup>2</sup> indeed, the fifteenth century presents at large a spectacle of prosaic worldliness and unideal aims. Yet the work done by the artists was the best work of the epoch, far more fruitful of results and far more permanently valuable than that of Filelfo inveighing in filthy satires against his personal foes, or of Beccadelli endeavouring to inoculate modern literature with the virus of pagan vices. Petrarch in the fourteenth century had preached the evangel of humanism; Giotto in the fourteenth century had given life to painting. The students of the fifteenth, though their spirit was so much baser and less large than Petrarch's, were following in the path marked out for them and leading forward to Erasmus. The painters of the fifteenth, though they lacked the unity of aim and freshness of their master, were learning what was needful for the crowning and fulfilment of his labours on a loftier stage.

Foremost among the pioneers of Renaissance-painting, towering above them all by head and shoulders, like Saul among the tribes of Israel, stands Masaccio.<sup>3</sup> The Brancacci Chapel of the Carmine at Florence, painted in fresco almost entirely by his hand, was the school where all succeeding artists studied, and whence Raphael deigned to borrow the composition and the figures of a portion of his Cartoons. The 'Legend of S. Catherine,' painted by Masaccio in S. Clemente at Rome, though an earlier work, is scarcely less remarkable as evidence that a new age had begun for art. In his frescoes the qualities essential to the style of the Renaissance—what Vasari calls the modern manner—appear precociously full-formed. Besides life and nature they have dignity and breadth, the grand and heightened manner of emancipated art. Masaccio is not inferior to Giotto in his power of telling a story with simplicity; but he understands the value of perspective for realising the circumstances of the scene depicted. His august groups of the Apostles are surrounded by landscape tranquillising to the sense and pleasant to the eye. Mountain-lines and distant horizons lend space and largeness to his compositions, and the figures of his men and women move freely in a world prepared for them. In Masaccio's management of drapery we discern the influence of plastic art; without concealing the limbs, which are always modelled with a freedom that suggests the power of movement even in stationary attitudes, the voluminous folds and broad masses of powerfully coloured raiment invest his forms with a nobility unknown before in painting. His power of representing the nude is not less remarkable. But what above all else renders his style attractive is the sense of aerial space. For the first time in art the

<sup>2</sup> See *Revival of Learning*, pp. 406-411.

<sup>3</sup> His real name was Tommaso di Ser Giovanni, of the family of Scheggia. Masaccio means in Tuscan, 'Great hulking Tom,' just as Masolino, his supposed master and fellow-worker, means 'Pretty little Tom.' Masolino was Tommaso di Cristoforo Fini, born in 1384 in S. Croce. It is now thought that we have but little of his authentic work except the frescoes at Castiglione di Olona, near Milan. Masaccio was born at San Giovanni, in the upper valley of the Arno, in 1402. He died at Rome in 1429.

forms of living persons are shown moving in a transparent medium of light, graduated according to degrees of distance, and harmonised by tones that indicate an atmospheric unity. In comparing Masaccio with Giotto we must admit that, with so much gained, something has been sacrificed. Giotto succeeded in presenting the idea, the feeling, the pith of the event, and pierced at once to the very ground-root of imagination. Masaccio thinks overmuch, perhaps, of external form, and is intent on air-effects and colouring. He realises the phenomenal truth with a largeness and a dignity peculiar to himself. But we ask whether he was capable of bringing close to our hearts the secret and the soul of spiritual things. Has not art beneath his touch become more scenic, losing thereby somewhat of dramatic poignancy?

Born in 1402, Masaccio left Florence in 1429 for Rome, and was not heard of by his family again. Thus perished, at the early age of twenty-seven, a painter whose work reveals not only the originality of real creative genius, but a maturity that moves our wonder. What might he not have done if he had lived? Between his style in the Brancacci chapel and that of Raphael in the Vatican there seems to be but a narrow gap, which might perchance have been passed over by this man, if death had spared him.

Masaccio can by no means be taken as a fair instance of the painters of his age. Gifted with exceptional powers, he overleaped the difficulties of his art, and arrived intuitively at results whereof as yet no scientific certainty had been secured. His contemporaries applied humbler talents to severe study, and wrought out by patient industry those principles which Masaccio had divined. Their work is therefore at the same time more archaic and more pedantic, judged by modern standards. It is difficult to imagine a style of painting less attractive than that of Paolo Uccello.<sup>4</sup> Yet his fresco of the 'Deluge' in the cloisters of S. Maria Novella, and his battle-pieces—one of which may be seen in the National Gallery—taught nearly all that painters needed of perspective. The lesson was conveyed in hard, dry, uncouth diagrams, ill-coloured and deficient in the quality of animation. At this period the painters, like the sculptors, were trained as goldsmiths, and Paolo had been a craftsman of that guild before he gave his whole mind to the study of linear perspective and the drawing of animals. The precision required in this trade forced artists to study the modelling of the human form, and promoted that crude naturalism which has been charged against their pictures. Carefully to observe, minutely to imitate some actual person—the Sandro of your workshop or the Cecco from the market-place—became the pride of painters. No longer fascinated by the dreams of mediæval mysticism, and unable for the moment to invest ideals of the fancy with reality, they meanwhile made the great discovery that the body of a man is a miracle of beauty, each limb a divine wonder, each muscle a joy as great as sight of stars or

<sup>4</sup> His family name was Doni. He was born about 1396, and died at the age of about 73. He got his name Uccello from his partiality for painting birds, it is said.

flowers. Much that is repulsive in the pictures of the Pollajuoli and Andrea del Castagno, the leaders in this branch of realism, is due to admiration for the newly studied mechanism of the human form. They seem to have cared but little to select their types or to accentuate expression, so long as they were able to portray the man before them with fidelity.<sup>5</sup> The comeliness of average humanity was enough for them; the difficulties of reproducing what they saw, exhausted their force. Thus the master-works on which they staked their reputation show them emulous of fame as craftsmen, while only here and there, in minor paintings for the most part, the poet that was in them sees the light. Brunelleschi told Donatello the truth when he said that his Christ was a crucified *contadino*. Intent on mastering the art of modelling, and determined above all things to be accurate, the sculptor had forgotten that something more was wanted in a crucifix than the careful study of a robust peasant-boy.

A story of a somewhat later date still further illustrates the dependence of the work of art upon the model in Renaissance Florence. Jacopo Sansovino made the statue of a youthful 'Bacchus' in close imitation of a lad called Pippo Fabro. Posing for hours together naked in a cold studio, Pippo fell into ill health, and finally went mad. In his madness he frequently assumed the attitude of the 'Bacchus' to which his life had been sacrificed, and which is now his portrait. The legend of the painter who kept his model on a cross in order that he might the more minutely represent the agonies of death by crucifixion is but a mythus of the realistic method carried to its logical extremity.

Piero della Francesca, a native of Borgo San Sepolcro, and a pupil of Domenico Veneziano, must be placed among the painters of this period who advanced their art by scientific study. He carried the principles of correct drawing and solid modelling as far as it is possible for the genius of man to do, and composed a treatise on perspective in the vulgar tongue. But these are not his only titles to fame. By dignity of portraiture, by loftiness of style, and by a certain poetical solemnity of imagination, he raised himself above the level of the mass of his contemporaries. Those who have once seen his fresco of the 'Resurrection' in the hall of the Compagnia della Misericordia at Borgo San Sepolcro, will never forget the deep impression of solitude and aloofness from all earthly things produced by it. It is not so much the admirable grouping and masterly drawing of the four sleeping soldiers, or even the majestic type of the Christ emergent without effort from the grave, as the communication of a mood felt by the painter and instilled into our souls, that makes this by far the grandest, most poetic, and most awe-inspiring picture of the Resurrection. The landscape is simple and severe, with the cold light upon it of the dawn before the sun is risen. The drapery of the ascending Christ is tinged with auroral colours like the earliest clouds of morning; and His level eyes, with the mystery of the slumber of the grave still upon them,

<sup>5</sup> See above, p. 652, for what has been said about Verocchio's 'David.'



seem gazing, far beyond our scope of vision, into the region of the eternal and illimitable. Thus, with Piero for mystagogue, we enter an inner shrine of deep religious revelation. The same high imaginative faculty marks the fresco of the 'Dream of Constantine' in S. Francesco at Arezzo, where, it may be said in passing, the student of art must learn to estimate what Piero could do in the way of accurate foreshortening, powerful delineation of solid bodies, and noble treatment of drapery.<sup>6</sup> To Piero, again, we owe most precious portraits of two Italian princes, Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta and Federigo of Urbino, masterpieces<sup>7</sup> of fidelity to nature and sound workmanship.

In addition to the many great paintings that command our admiration, Piero claims honour as the teacher of Melozzo da Forlì and of Luca Signorelli. Little is left to show the greatness of Melozzo; but the frescoes preserved in the Quirinal are enough to prove that he continued the grave and lofty manner of his master.<sup>8</sup> Signorelli bears a name illustrious in the first rank of Italian painters; and to speak of him will be soon my duty. It was the special merit of these artists to elevate the ideal of form and to seek after sublimity, without departing from the path of conscientious labour, in an age preoccupied on the one hand with technicality and naturalism, on the other with decorative prettiness and pietism.

While the Florentine and Umbro-Tuscan masters were perfecting the arts of accurate design, a similar direction toward scientific studies was given to the painters of Northern Italy at Padua. Michael Savonarola, writing his panegyric of Padua about 1440, expressly mentions Perspective as a branch of philosophy taught in the high school;<sup>9</sup> and the influence of Francesco Squarcione, though exaggerated by Vasari, was not inconsiderable. This man, who began life as a tailor or embroiderer, was early interested in the fine arts. Like Ciriaco of Ancona, he had a taste for travel and collection,<sup>10</sup> visiting the sacred soil of Greece and sojourning in divers towns of Italy, everywhere making drawings, copying pictures, taking casts from statues, and amassing memoranda on the relics of antiquity as well as on the methods practised by contemporary painters. Equipped with these aids to study, Squarcione returned to Padua, his native place, where he opened a kind of school for painters. It is clear that he was himself less an artist than an amateur of painting, with a turn for teaching, and a conviction, based upon the humanistic instincts of his age, that the right way of learning was

<sup>6</sup> A drawing made in red chalk for this 'Dream of Constantine' has been published in facsimile by Ottley, in his *Italian School of Design*. He wrongly attributes it, however, to Giorgione, and calls it a 'Subject Unknown.'

<sup>7</sup> The one in S. Francesco at Rimini, the other in the Uffizzi.

<sup>8</sup> Two angels have recently been published by the Arundel Society who have also copied Melozzo's wall-painting of Sixtus IV. in the Vatican. It is probable that the picture in the Royal Collection at Windsor, of Duke Frederick of Urbino listening to the lecture of a Humanist, is also a work of Melozzo's, much spoiled by re-painting. See *Revival of Learning*, p. 468.

<sup>9</sup> Muratori, vol. xxiv. 1181.

<sup>10</sup> For Ciriaco of Ancona, see *Revival of Learning*, p. 401.

by imitation of the antique. During the course of his career he is said to have taught no less than 137 pupils, training his apprentices by the exhibition of casts and drawings, and giving them instruction in the science of perspective.<sup>11</sup> From his studio issued the mighty Andrea Mantegna, whose life-work, one of the most weighty moments in the history of modern art, will be noticed at length in the next chapter. For the present it is enough to observe that through Squarcione the scientific and humanistic movement of the fifteenth century was communicated to the art of Northern Italy. There, as at Florence, painting was separated from ecclesiastical tradition, and a new starting-point was sought in the study of mathematical principles, and the striving after form for its own sake.

Without attempting the detailed history of painting in this period of divided energy and diverse effort, it is needful here to turn aside and notice those masters of the fifteenth century who remained comparatively uninfluenced by the scholastic studies of their contemporaries. Of these, the earliest and most notable was Gentile da Fabriano, the last great painter of the Gubbian school.<sup>12</sup> In the predella of his masterpiece at Florence there is a little panel, which attracts attention as one of the earliest attempts to represent a sunrise. The sun has just appeared above one of those bare sweeping hillsides so characteristic of Central Italian landscape. Part of the country lies untouched by morning, cold and grey: the rest is silvered with the level light, falling sideways on the burnished leaves and red fruit of the orange trees, and casting shadows from olive branches on the furrows of a new-ploughed field. Along the road journey Joseph and Mary and the infant Christ, so that you may call this little landscape a 'Flight into Egypt,' if you choose. Gentile, with all his Umbrian pietism, was a painter for whom the fair sights of the earth had exquisite value. The rich costumes of the Eastern kings, their train of servants, their hawks and horses, hounds and monkeys, are painted by him with scrupulous fidelity; and nothing can be more true to nature than the wild flowers he has copied in the framework of this picture. Yet we perceive that, though he felt in his own way the naturalistic impulse of the age, he had scarcely anything in common with masters like Uccello or Verocchio.

Still less had Fra Angelico. Of all the painters of this period he most successfully resisted the persuasions of the Renaissance, and perfected an art that owed little to sympathy with the external world. He thought it a sin to study or to imitate the naked form, and his most beautiful faces seem copied from angels seen in visions, not from any sons of men. While the artists around him were absorbed in mastering the laws of geometry and anatomy, Fra Angelico sought to express the inner life

<sup>11</sup> The services rendered by Squarcione to art have been thoroughly discussed by Messrs. Crowe and Cavalcaselle, *Painting in North Italy*, vol. i. chap. 2. I cannot but think that they underrate the importance of his school.

<sup>12</sup> He was born between 1360 and 1370, and he settled at Florence about 1422, where he opened a *bottega* in S. Trinità. In 1423 he painted his masterpiece, the 'Adoration of the Magi,' now exhibited in the Florentine Academy of Arts.

of the adoring soul. Only just so much of realism, whether in the drawing of the body and its drapery, or in the landscape background, as seemed necessary for suggesting the emotion or for setting forth the story, found its way into his pictures. The message they convey might have been told almost as perfectly upon the lute or viol. His world is a strange one—a world not of hills and fields and flowers and men of flesh and blood, but one where the people are embodied ecstasies, the colours tints from evening clouds or apocalyptic jewels, the scenery a flood of light or a background of illuminated gold. His mystic gardens, where the ransomed souls embrace, and dance with angels on the lawns outside the City of the Lamb, are such as were never trodden by the foot of man in any paradise of earth.

Criticism has a hard task in attempting to discern the merit of the several painters of this time. It is clear that we must look not to Fra Angelico but to Masaccio for the progressive forces that were carrying art forward to complete accomplishment. Yet the charm of Masaccio is as nothing in comparison with that which holds us spell-bound before the sacred and impassioned reveries of the Fiesolan monk. Masaccio had inestimable value for his contemporaries. Fra Angelico, now that we know all Masaccio can teach, has a quality so unique that we return again and again to the contemplation of his visions. Thus it often happens that we are tempted to exaggerate the historical importance of one painter because he touches us by some peculiar quality, and to over-estimate the intrinsic value of another because he was a motive power in his own age. Both these temptations should be resolutely resisted by the student who is capable of discerning different kinds of excellence and diverse titles to affectionate remembrance. Tracing the history of Italian painting is like pursuing a journey down an ever-broadening river, whose affluents are Giotto and Masaccio, Ghirlandajo, Signorelli, and Mantegna. We have to turn aside and land upon the shore, in order to visit the heaven-reflecting lakelet, self-encompassed and secluded, called Angelico.

Benozzo Gozzoli, the pupil of Fra Angelico, but in no sense the continuator of his tradition, exhibits the blending of several styles by a genius of less creative than assimilative force. That he was keenly interested in the problems of perspective and foreshortening, and that none of the knowledge collected by his fellow-workers had escaped him, is sufficiently proved by his frescoes at Pisa. His compositions are rich in architectural details, not always chosen with pure taste, but painted with an almost infantine delight in the magnificence of buildings. Quaint birds and beasts and reptiles crowd his landscapes; while his imagination runs riot in rocks and rivers, trees of all variety, and rustic incidents adopted from real life. At the same time he felt an enjoyment like that of Gentile da Fabriano in depicting the pomp and circumstance of pageantry, and no Florentine of the fifteenth century was more fond of assembling the personages of contemporary history in

groups.<sup>13</sup> Thus he showed himself sensitive to the chief influences of the earlier Renaissance, and combined the scientific and naturalistic tendencies of his age in a manner not devoid of native poetry. What he lacked was depth of feeling, the sense of noble form, the originative force of a great mind. His poetry of invention, though copious and varied, owed its charm to the unstudied grace of improvisation, and he often undertook subjects where his idyllic rather than dramatic genius failed to sustain him. It is difficult, for instance, to comprehend how M. Rio could devote two pages to Gozzoli's 'Destruction of Sodom,' so comparatively unimpressive in spite of its aggregated incidents, when he passes by the 'Fulminati' of Signorelli, so tragic in its terrible simplicity, with a word.<sup>14</sup>

This painter's marvellous rapidity of execution enabled him to produce an almost countless series of decorative works. The best of these are the frescoes of the Pisan Campo Santo, of the Riccardi Palace of Florence, of San Gemignano, and of Montefalco. It has been well said of Gozzoli that, though he attempted grand subjects on a large scale, he could not rise above the limitations of a style better adapted to the decoration of *cassoni* than to fresco.<sup>15</sup> Yet within the range of his own powers there are few more fascinating painters. His feeling for fresh nature—for hunters in the woods at night or dawn, for vintage-gatherers among their grapes, for festival troops of cavaliers and pages, and for the marriage-dances of young men and maidens—yields a delightful gladness to compositions lacking the simplicity of Giotto and the dignity of Masaccio.<sup>16</sup> No one knew better how to sketch the quarrels of little boys in their nursery, or the laughter of serving-women, or children carrying their books to school;<sup>17</sup> and when the idyllic genius of the man was applied to graver themes, his fancy supplied him with multitudes of angels waving rainbow-coloured wings above fair mortal faces. Beves of them nestle like pigeons on the penthouse of the hut of Bethlehem, or crowd together round the infant Christ.<sup>18</sup>

From these observations on the style of Benozzo Gozzoli it will be seen that in the evolution of Renaissance culture he may be compared with the romantic poets for whom the cheerfulness of nature and the joy that comes to men from living in a many-coloured world of inex-

<sup>13</sup> See, for instance, the valuable portraits of the Medicean family with Ficino and Poliziano, in the fresco of the 'Tower of Babel' at Pisa.

<sup>14</sup> *L'Art Chrétien*, vol. ii. p. 397.

<sup>15</sup> The same remark might be made about the Venetian Bonifazio. It is remarkable that the 'Adoration of the Magi' was always a favourite subject with painters of this calibre.

<sup>16</sup> I may refer to the picture of the hunters in the Taylor Gallery at Oxford, the 'Vintage of Noah' at Pisa, the attendants of the Magi in the Riccardi Palace, and the *Carola* in the 'Marriage of Jacob and Rachel' at Pisa.

<sup>17</sup> 'Stories of Isaac and Ishmael and of Jacob and Esau' at Pisa, and 'Story of S. Augustine' at San Gemignano. Nothing can be prettier than the school children in the latter series. The group of the little boy, horsed upon a bigger boy's back for a whipping, is one of the most natural episodes in painting.

<sup>18</sup> Riccardi Chapel.

haustible delight were sufficient sources of inspiration. It should be mentioned lastly that he enjoyed the patronage and friendship of the Medicean princes.

Another painter favoured by the Medici was Fra Filippo Lippi, whose life and art-work were alike the deviation of a pleasure-loving temperament from its natural sphere into the service of the Church. Left an orphan at the age of two years, he was brought up by an aunt, who placed him, as a boy of eight, in the convent of the Carmine at Florence. For monastic duties he had no vocation, and the irregularities of his behaviour caused scandal even in that age of cynical indulgence. It can scarcely be doubted that the schism between his practice and profession served to debase and vulgarise a genius of fine imaginative quality, while the uncongenial work of decorating choirs and painting altar-pieces limed the wings of his swift spirit with the dulness of routine that savoured of hypocrisy. Bound down to sacred subjects, he was too apt to make angels out of street-urchins, and to paint the portraits of his peasant-loves for Virgins.<sup>19</sup> His delicate sense of natural beauty gave peculiar charm to this false treatment of religious themes. Nothing, for example, can be more attractive than the rows of angels bearing lilies in his 'Coronation of the Virgin';<sup>20</sup> and yet, when we regard them closely, we find that they have no celestial quality of form or feature. Their grace is earthly, and the spirit breathed upon the picture is the loveliness of colour, quiet and yet glowing—blending delicate blues and greens with whiteness purged of glare. The beauties as well as the defects of such compositions make us regret that Fra Filippo never found a more congenial sphere for his imagination. As a painter of subjects half-humorous and half-pathetic, or as the illustrator of romantic stories, we fancy that he might have won fame rivalled only by the greatest colourists.

One such picture it was granted him to paint, and this is his masterpiece. In the prime of life he was commissioned to decorate the choir of the cathedral at Prato with the legends of S. John Baptist and S. Stephen. All of these frescoes are noteworthy for their firm grasp upon reality in the portraits of Florentine worthies, and for the harmonious disposition of the groups; but the scene of Salome dancing before Herod is the best for its poetic feeling. Her movement across the floor before the tyrant and his guests at table, the quaint fluttering of her drapery, the well-bred admiration of the spectators, their horror when she brings the Baptist's head to Herodias, and the weak face of the half-remorseful Herod are expressed with a dramatic power that shows the genius of a poet painter. And even more lovely than Salome are a pair of girls locked in each other's arms close by Herodias on the dais. A natural and spontaneous melody, not only in the suggested movements of this scene, but also in the colouring, choice of form, and treatment of drapery, makes it one of the most musical of pictures ever painted.

<sup>19</sup> For an example, the picture of Madonna worshipping the infant Christ upheld by two little angels in the Uffizzi.

<sup>20</sup> In the Academy of Fine Arts at Florence.

Fra Filippo was not so successful in the choir of the cathedral at Spoleto, where he undertook to paint scenes from the life of the Virgin. Yet those who have not examined these frescoes, ruinous in their decay and spoiled by stupid restoration, can form no just notion of the latent capacity of this great master. The whole of the half-dome above the tribune is filled with a 'Coronation of Madonna.' A circular rainbow surrounds both her and Christ. She is kneeling with fiery rays around her, glorified by her assumption into heaven. Christ is enthroned, and at His side stands a seat prepared for His mother, as soon as the crown that He is placing on her head shall have made her Queen. From the outer courts of heaven, thronged with multitudes of celestial beings, angels are crowding in, breaking the lines of the prismatic aureole, as though the ardour of their joy could scarcely be repressed; while the everlasting light of God sheds radiance from above, and far below lies earth with diminished sun and moon. The boldness of conception in this singular fresco reveals a genius capable of grappling with such problems as Tintoretto solved. Fra Filippo died at Spoleto, and left his work unfinished to the care of his assistant, the Fra Diamante. Over his tomb Lorenzo de' Medici caused a monument to be erected, and Poliziano wrote Latin couplets to commemorate the fame of a painter highly prized by his patrons.

The space devoted in these pages to Fra Lippo Lippi is justified not only by the excellence of his own work, but also by the influence he exercised over two of the best Florentine painters of the fifteenth century. Whether Filippino Lippi was in truth his son by Lucrezia Buti, a novice he is said to have carried from her cloister in Prato, has been called in question by recent critics; but they adduce no positive arguments for discrediting the story of Vasari.<sup>21</sup> There can, however, be no doubt that to the Frate, whether he was his father or only his teacher, Filippino owed his style. His greatest works were painted in continuation of Masaccio's frescoes in the Carmine at Florence. It is the best warrant of their excellence that we feel them worthy to hold the place they do, and that Raphael transferred one of their motives, the figure of S. Paul addressing S. Peter in prison, to his cartoon of 'Mars' Hill.' That he was not so accomplished as Masaccio in the art of composition, that his scale of colour is less pleasing, and that his style in general lacks the elevation of his mighty predecessor, is not sufficient to place him in any position of humiliating inferiority.<sup>22</sup> What above all things

<sup>21</sup> Crowe and Cavalcaselle, vol. ii. chap. 19. Nothing was more common in the practice of Italian arts than for pupils to take their names from their masters, in the same way as they took them from their fathers, by the prefix *di* or otherwise.

<sup>22</sup> The most simply beautiful of Filippino's pictures is the oil-painting in the Badia at Florence, which represents Madonna attended by angels dictating the story of her life to S. Bernard. In this most lovely religious picture Filippino comes into direct competition with Perugino (see the same subject at Munich), without suffering by the contrast. The type of Our Lady, striven after by Botticelli and other masters of his way of feeling, seems to me more thoroughly attained by Filippino than by any of his fellow-workers. She is a woman acquainted with grief and nowise distinguished

interests the student of the Renaissance in Filippino's work, is the powerful action of revived classicism on his manner. This can be traced better in the Caraffa Chapel of S. Maria sopra Minerva at Rome and in the Strozzi Chapel of S. Maria Novella at Florence than in the Carmine. The 'Triumph of S. Thomas Aquinas' and the 'Miracle of S. John' are remarkable for an almost insolent display of Roman antiquities—not studied, it need scarcely be observed, with the scientific accuracy of Alma Tadema—for such science was non-existent in the fifteenth century—but paraded with a kind of passion. To this delight in antique details Filippino added violent gestures, strange attitudes, and affected draperies, producing a general result impressive through the artist's energy, but quaint and unattractive.

Sandro Botticelli, the other disciple of Fra Lippo, bears a name of greater mark. He is one of those artists, much respected in their own days, who suffered eclipse from the superior splendour of immediate successors, and to whom, through sympathy stimulated by prolonged study of the fifteenth century, we have of late paid tardy and perhaps exaggerated honours.<sup>23</sup> His fellow-workers seem to have admired him as an able draughtsman gifted with a rare if whimsical imagination; but no one recognised in him a leader of his age. For us he has an almost unique value as representing the interminglement of antique and modern fancy at a moment of transition, as embodying in some of his pictures the subtlest thought and feeling of men for whom the classic myths were beginning to live once more, while new guesses were timidly hazarded in the sphere of orthodoxy.<sup>24</sup> Self-confident sensuality had not as yet encouraged painters to substitute a florid rhetoric for the

by the radiance of her beauty among the daughters of earth. It is measureless love for the mother of his Lord that makes S. Bernard bow before her with eyes of wistful adoration and hushed reverence.

<sup>23</sup> The study of the fine arts offers few subjects of more curious interest than the vicissitudes through which painters of the type of Botticelli, not absolutely and confessedly in the first rank, but attractive by reason of their relation to the spirit of their age, and of the seal of *intimité* set upon their work have passed. In the last century and the beginning of this, our present preoccupation with Botticelli would have passed for a mild lunacy, because he has none of the qualities then most in vogue and most enthusiastically studied, and because the moment in the history of culture he so faithfully represents, was then but little understood. The prophecy of Mr. Ruskin, the tendencies of our best contemporary are in Mr. Burne Jones's painting, the specific note of our recent fashionable poetry, and, more than all, our delight in the delicately poised psychological problems of the middle Renaissance, have evoked a kind of hero-worship for this excellent artist and true poet.

<sup>24</sup> A friend, writing to me from Italy, speaks thus of Botticelli, and of the painters associated with him: 'When I ask myself what it is I find fascinating in him—for instance, which of his pictures, or what element in them—I am forced to admit that it is the touch of paganism in him, the fairy-story element, *the echo of a beautiful lapsed mythology which he has found the means of transmitting.*' The words I have printed in italics seem to me very true. At the same time we must bear in mind that the scientific investigation of nature had not in the fifteenth century begun to stand between the sympathetic intellect and the outer world. There was still the possibility of that 'lapsed mythology,' the dream of poets and the delight of artists, seeming positively the best form of expression for sentiments aroused by nature.



travail of their brain; nor was enough known about antiquity to make the servile imitation of Greek or Roman fragments possible. Yet scholarship had already introduced a novel element into the culture of the nation. It was no doubt with a kind of wonder that the artists heard of Fauns and Sylvens, and the birth of Aphrodite from the waves. Such fables took deep hold upon their fancy, stirring them to strange and delicate creations, the offspring of their own thought, and no mere copies of marbles seen in statue galleries. The very imperfection of these pictures lends a value to them in the eyes of the student, by helping him to comprehend exactly how the revelations of the humanists affected the artistic sense of Italy.

In the mythological work of Botticelli there is always an element of allegory, recalling the Middle Ages and rendering it far truer to the feelings of the fifteenth century than to the myths it illustrates. His painting of the 'Spring,' suggested by a passage from Lucretius,<sup>25</sup> is exquisitely poetic; and yet the true spirit of the Latin verse has not been seized—to have done that would have taxed the energies of Titian—but something special to the artist and significant for Medicean scholarship has been added. There is none of the Roman largeness and freedom in its style; Venus and her Graces are even melancholy, and their movements savour of affectation. This combination or confusion of artistic impulses in Botticelli, this treatment of pagan themes in the spirit of mediæval mysticism, sometimes ended in grotesqueness. It might suffice to cite the pregnant 'Aphrodite' in the National Gallery, if the 'Mars and Venus' in the same collection were not even a more striking instance. Mars is a young Florentine, whose throat and chest are beautifully studied from the life, but whose legs and belly, belonging no doubt to the same model, fall far short of heroic form. He lies fast asleep with the corners of his mouth drawn down, as though he were about to snore. Opposite there sits a woman, weary and wan, draped from neck to foot in the thin raiment Botticelli loved. Four little goat-footed Cupids playing with the armour of the sleeping lad complete the composition. These wanton loves are admirably conceived and exquisitely drawn; nor indeed can any drawing exceed in beauty the line that leads from the flank along the ribs and arm of Mars up to his lifted elbow. The whole design, like one of Piero di Cosimo's pictures in another key, leaves a strong impression on the mind, due partly to the oddity of treatment, partly to the careful work displayed, and partly to the individuality of the artist. It gives us keen pleasure to feel exactly how a painter like Botticelli applied the dry naturalism of the early Florentine Renaissance, as well as his own original imagination, to a subject he imperfectly realised. Yet are we right in assuming that he meant the female figure in this group for Aphrodite, the sleeping man for Ares? A Greek or a Roman would have rejected this picture as false to the mythus of Mars and Venus; and whether Botticelli wished to be less descriptive than emblematic, might be fairly questioned.

<sup>25</sup> *De Rerum Natura*, lib. v. 737.

The face and attitude of that unseductive Venus, wide awake and melancholy, opposite her snoring lover, seems to symbolise the indignities which women may have to endure from insolent and sottish boys with only youth to recommend them. This interpretation, however, sounds like satire. We are left to conjecture whether Botticelli designed his composition for an allegory of intemperance, the so-called Venus typifying some moral quality.

Botticelli's 'Birth of Aphrodite' expresses this transient moment in the history of the Renaissance with more felicity. It would be impossible for any painter to design a more exquisitely outlined figure than that of his Venus, who, with no covering but her golden hair, is wafted to the shore by zephyrs. Roses fall upon the ruffled waves, and the young gods of the air twine hands and feet together as they float. In the picture of 'Spring' there is the same choice of form, the same purity of line, the same rare interlacement in the limbs. It would seem as though Botticelli intended every articulation of the body to express some meaning, and this, though it enhances the value of his work for sympathetic students, often leads him to the verge of affectation. Nothing but a touch of affectation in the twined fingers of Raphael and Tobias impairs the beauty of one of Botticelli's best pictures at Turin. We feel the same discord looking at them as we do while reading the occasional *concetti* in Petrarch; and all the more in each case does the discord pain us because we know that it results from their specific quality carried to excess.

Botticelli's sensibility to the refinements of drawing gave peculiar character to all his work. Attention has frequently been called to the beauty of his roses.<sup>26</sup> Every curl in their frail petals is rendered with as much care as though they were the hands or feet of Graces. Nor is it, perhaps, a mere fancy to imagine that the corolla of an open rose suggested to Botticelli's mind the composition of his best-known picture, the circular 'Coronation of the Virgin' in the Uffizzi. That masterpiece combines all Botticelli's best qualities. For rare distinction of beauty in the faces it is unique, while the mystic calm and resignation, so misplaced in his Aphrodites, find a meaning here.<sup>27</sup> There is only one other picture in Italy, a 'Madonna and Child with S. Catherine' in a landscape by Boccaccino da Cremona, that in any degree rivals the peculiar beauty of its types.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> The rose-tree background in a Madonna belonging to Lord Elcho is a charming instance of the value given to flowers by careful treatment.

<sup>27</sup> I cannot bring myself to accept Mr. Pater's reading of the Madonna's expression. It seems to me that Botticelli meant to portray the mingled awe and tranquillity of a mortal mother chosen for the Son of God. He appears to have sometimes aimed at conveying more than painting can compass; and, since he had not Lionardo's genius, he gives sadness, mournfulness, or discontent, for some more subtle mood. Next to the Madonna of the Uffizzi, Botticelli's loveliest religious picture to my mind is the 'Nativity' belonging to Mr. Fuller Maitland. Poetic imagination in a painter has produced nothing more graceful and more tender than the dance of angels in the air above, and the embracement of the angels and the shepherds on the lawns below.

<sup>28</sup> In the Academy of Fine Arts at Venice. I do not mention this picture as a com-

Sandro Botticelli was not a great painter in the same sense as Andrea Mantegna. But he was a true poet within the limits of a certain sphere. We have to seek his parallel poet among the verse-writers rather than the artists of his day. Some of the stanzas of Poliziano and Boiardo, in particular, might have been written to explain his pictures, or his pictures might have been painted to illustrate their verses.<sup>29</sup> In both Poliziano and Boiardo we find the same touch upon antique things as in Botticelli; and this makes him serviceable almost above all painters to the readers of Renaissance poetry.

The name of Piero di Cosimo has been mentioned incidentally in connection with that of Botticelli; and though his life exceeds the limits assigned for this chapter, so many links unite him to the class of painters I have been discussing, that I can find no better place to speak of him than this. His biography forms one of the most amusing chapters in Vasari, who has taken great delight in noting Piero's quaint humours and eccentric habits, and whose description of a Carnival triumph devised by him is one of our most precious documents in illustration of Renaissance pageantry.<sup>30</sup> The point that connects him with Botticelli is the romantic treatment of classical mythology, best exemplified in his pictures of the tale of Perseus and Andromeda.<sup>31</sup> Piero was by nature and employment a decorative painter; the construction of cars for pageants, and the adornment of dwelling rooms and marriage chests, affected his whole style, rendering it less independent and more quaint than that of Botticelli. Landscape occupies the main part of his compositions, made up by a strange amalgam of the most eccentric details—rocks toppling over blue bays, sea-caverns, and fantastic mountain ranges. Groups of little figures disposed upon these spaces tell the story, and the best invention of the artist is lavished on the form of monstrous creatures like the dragon slain by Perseus. There is no attempt to treat the classic subject in a classic spirit: to do that, and to fail in doing it, remained for Cellini.<sup>32</sup> We have, on the contrary, before us an image of the orc, as it appeared to Ariosto's fancy—a creature borrowed from romance and made to play its part in a Greek myth. The same criticism applies to Piero's picture of the murdered Procris watched by a Satyr of the woodland.<sup>33</sup> In creating his Satyr the painter has not had recourse to any antique bas-relief, but has imagined for himself a being half human, half bestial, and yet wholly real; nor has he portrayed in Procris a nymph of Greek form, but a girl of Florence.

plete pendant to Botticelli's famous *tondo*. The faces of S. Catherine and Madonna, however, have something of the rarity that is so striking in that work.

<sup>29</sup> I might mention stanzas 122-124 of Poliziano's *Giostra*, describing Venus in the lap of Mars; or stanzas 99-107, describing the birth of Venus; and from Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato*, I might quote the episode of Rinaldo's punishment by Love (lib. ii. canto xv. 43), or the tale of Silvanella and Narcissus (lib. ii. canto xvii. 49).

<sup>30</sup> I hope to make use of this passage in a future section of my work on the Italian Poetry of the Renaissance. Therefore I pass by this portion of Piero's art-work now.

<sup>31</sup> Uffizzi Gallery.

<sup>32</sup> See the bas-relief upon the pedestal of his 'Perseus' in the Loggia de' Lanzi.

<sup>33</sup> In the National Gallery.

The strange animals and gaudy flowers introduced into the landscape background further remove the subject from the sphere of classic treatment. Florentine realism and quaint fancy being thus curiously blended, the artistic result may be profitably studied for the light it throws upon the so-called Paganism of the earlier Renaissance. Fancy at that moment was more free than when superior knowledge of antiquity had created a demand for reproductive art, and when the painters thought less of the meaning of the fable for themselves than of its capability of being used as a machine for the display of erudition.

It remains to speak of the painter who closes and at the same time gathers up the whole tradition of this period. Domenico Ghirlandajo deserves this place of honour not because he had the keenest intuitions, the deepest thought, the strongest passion, the subtlest fancy, the loftiest imagination—for in all these points he was excelled by some one or other of his contemporaries or predecessors—but because his intellect was the most comprehensive and his mastery of art the most complete. His life lasted from 1449 to 1498, and he did not distinguish himself as a painter till he was past thirty.<sup>34</sup> Therefore he does not properly fall within the limit of 1470, assigned roughly to this age of transition in painting. But in style and spirit he belonged to it, resuming in his own work the qualities we find scattered through the minor artists of the fifteenth century, and giving them the unity of fusion in a large and lucid manner. Like the painters hitherto discussed, he was working toward the full Renaissance; yet he reached it neither in ideality nor in freedom. His art is the art of the understanding only; and to this the masters of the golden age added radiance, sublimity, grace, passion—qualities of the imagination beyond the scope of men like Ghirlandajo.

It is almost with reluctance that a critic feels obliged to name this powerful but prosaic painter as the Giotto of the fifteenth century in Florence, the tutelary angel of an age inaugurated by Masaccio. He was a consummate master of the science collected by his predecessors. No one surpassed him in the use of fresco. His orderly composition, in the distribution of figures and the use of architectural accessories, is worthy of all praise; his portraiture is dignified and powerful;<sup>35</sup> his choice of form and treatment of drapery, noble. Yet we cannot help noting his deficiency in the finer sense of beauty, the absence of poetic inspiration or feeling in his work, the commonplaceness of his colour, and his wearisome reiteration of calculated effects. He never arrests attention by sallies of originality, or charms us by the delicacies of suggestive fancy. He is always at the level of his own achievement,

<sup>34</sup> His family name was Domenico di Currado di Doffo Bigordi. He probably worked during his youth and early manhood as a goldsmith and got his artist's name from the trade of making golden chaplets for the Florentine women. See Vasari, vol. v. p. 66.

<sup>35</sup> What, after all, remains the grandest quality of Ghirlandajo is his powerful drawing of characteristic heads. They are as various as they are vigorous. What a nation of strong men must the Florentines have been, we feel while gazing at his frescoes.

so that in the end we are as tired with able Ghirlandajo as the men of Athens with just Aristides. Who, however, but Ghirlandajo could have composed the frescoes of 'S. Fina' at S. Gemignano, the fresco of the 'Death of S. Francis' in S. Trinità at Florence, or that again of the 'Birth of the Virgin' in S. Maria Novella? There is something irritating in pure common sense imported into art, and Ghirlandajo's masterpieces are the apotheosis of that quality. How correct, how judicious, how sagacious, how mathematically ordered! we exclaim; but we gaze without emotion, and we turn away without regret. It does not vex us to read how Ghirlandajo used to scold his prentices for neglecting trivial orders that would fill his purse with money. Similar traits of character pain us with a sense of impropriety in Perugino. They harmonise with all we feel about the work of Ghirlandajo. It is bitter mortification to know that Michael Angelo never found space or time sufficient for his vast designs in sculpture. It is a positive relief to think that Ghirlandajo sighed in vain to have the circuit of the walls of Florence given him to paint. How he would have covered them with compositions, stately, flowing, easy, sober, and incapable of stirring any feeling in the soul!

Though Ghirlandajo lacked almost every true poetic quality, he combined the art of distributing figures in a given space, with perspective, fair knowledge of the nude, and truth to nature, in greater perfection than any other single painter of the age he represents; and since these were precisely the gifts of that age to the great Renaissance masters, we accord to him the place of historical honour. It should be added that, like almost all the artists of this epoch, he handled sacred and profane, ancient and modern, subjects in the same style, introducing contemporary customs and costumes. His pictures are therefore valuable for their portraits and their illustration of Florentine life. Fresco was his favourite vehicle; and in this preference he showed himself a true master of the school of Florence: but he is said to have maintained that mosaic, as more durable, was superior to wall-painting. This saying, if it be authentic, justifies our criticism of his cold achievement as a painter.

Reviewing the ground traversed in this and the last chapter, we find that the painting of Tuscany, and in particular the Florentine section of it, has absorbed attention. It is characteristic of the next age that other districts of Italy began to contribute their important quota to the general culture of the nation. The force generated in Tuscany expanded and dilated till every section of the country took part in the movement which Florence had been first to propagate. What was happening in scholarship began to manifest itself in art, for the same law of growth and distribution affected both alike; and thus the local differences of the Italians were to some extent abolished. The nation, never destined to acquire political union in the Renaissance, possessed at last an intellectual unity in its painters and its students, which justifies our speaking of the great men of the golden period as Italians

and not as citizens of such or such a burgh. In the Middle Ages United Italy was an Idea to theorists like Dante, who dreamed for her an actual supremacy beneath her Emperor's sway in Rome. The reasoning to which they trusted proved fallacious, and their hopes were quenched. Instead of the political empire of the 'De Monarchiâ,' a spiritual empire had been created, and the Italians were never more powerful in Europe than when their sacred city was being plundered by the imperial bandits in 1527. It is necessary, at the risk of some repetition, to keep this point before the reader, if only as an apology for the method of treatment to be followed in the next chapter, where the painters of the mid-Renaissance period will be reviewed less in relation to their schools and cities than as representatives of the Italian spirit.

Since the intellectual unity gained by the Italians in the age of the Renaissance was chiefly due to the Florentines, it is a matter of some moment to reconsider the direct influences brought to bear upon the arts in Florence during the fifteenth century. I have chosen Ghirlandajo as the representative of painting in that period. I have also expressed the opinion that his style is singularly cold and prosaic, and have hinted that this prosaic and cold quality was caused by a defect of emotional enthusiasm, by preoccupation with finite aims. Herein Ghirlandajo did but reflect the temper of his age—that temper which Cosimo de' Medici, the greatest patron of both art and scholarship in Florence before 1470, represented in his life and in his public policy. It concerns us, therefore, to take into account the nature of the patronage extended by the Medici to art. Excessive praise and blame have been showered upon these burgher princes in almost equal quantities; so that, if we were to place Roscoe and Rio, as the representatives of conflicting views, in the scales together, they would balance each other, and leave the index quivering. This bare statement warns the critic to be cautious, and inclines him to accept the intermediate conclusion that neither the Medici nor the artists could escape the conditions of their century. It is specially argued on the one hand against the Medici that they encouraged a sensual and worldly style of art, employing the painters to decorate their palaces with nude figures, and luring them away from sacred to profane subjects. Yet Cosimo gave orders to Donatello for his 'David' and his 'Judith,' employed Michelozzo and Brunelleschi to build him convents and churches, and filled the library of S. Marco, where Fra Angelico was painting, with a priceless collection of MSS. His own private chapel was decorated by Benozzo Gozzoli. Fra Lippo Lippi and Michael Angelo Buonarroti were the house-friends of Lorenzo de' Medici. Leo Battista Alberti was a member of his philosophical society. The only great Florentine artist who did not stand in cordial relations to the Medicean circle was Lionardo da Vinci. This sufficiently shows that the Medicean patronage was commensurate with the best products of Florentine genius; nor would it be easy to demonstrate that encouragement, so largely exhibited and so intelligently used, could have been in the main injurious to the arts.

There is, however, a truth in the old grudge against the Medicean princes. They enslaved Florence; and even painting was not slow to suffer from the stifling atmosphere of tyranny. Lorenzo deliberately set himself to enfeeble the people by luxury, partly because he liked voluptuous living, partly because he aimed at popularity, and partly because it was his interest to enervate republican virtues. The arts used for the purposes of decoration in triumphs and carnival shows became the instruments of careless pleasure; and there is no doubt that even earnest painters lent their powers with no ill-will and no bad conscience to the service of lascivious patrons. 'Per la città, in diverse case, fece tondi di sua mano e femmine ignude assai,' says Vasari about Sandro Botticelli, who afterwards became a Piagnone and refused to touch a pencil.<sup>36</sup> We may, therefore, reasonably concede that if the Medici had never taken hold on Florence, or if the spirit of the times had made them other than they were in loftiness of aim and nobleness of heart, the arts of Italy in the Renaissance might have shown less of worldliness and materialism. It was against the demoralisation of society by paganism, as against the enslavement of Florence by her tyrants, that Savonarola strove; and since the Medici were the leaders of the classical revival, as well as the despots of the dying commonwealth, they justly bear the lion's share of that blame which fell in general upon the vices of their age denounced by the prophet of S. Marco. We may regard it either as a singular misfortune for Italy or as the strongest sign of deep-seated Italian corruption, that the most brilliant leaders of culture both at Florence and at Rome—Cosimo, Lorenzo, and Giovanni de' Medici—promoted rather than checked the debasing influences of the Renaissance, and added the weight of their authority to the popular craving for sensuous amusement.

Meanwhile, what was truly great and noble in Renaissance Italy, found its proper home in Florence; where the spirit of freedom, if only as an idea, still ruled; where the populace was still capable of being stirred to super-sensual enthusiasm; and where the flame of the modern intellect burned with its purest, whitest lustre.

<sup>36</sup> In many houses he painted roundels with his own hand, and of naked women plenty.



## CHAPTER VI

### PAINTING

*Two Periods in the True Renaissance—Andrea Mantegna—His Statuesque Design—His Naturalism—Roman Inspiration—Triumph of Julius Caesar—Bas-reliefs—Lucca Signorelli—The Precursor of Michael Angelo—Anatomical Studies—Sense of Beauty—The Chapel of S. Brizio at Orvieto—Its Arabesques and Medallions—Degrees in his Ideal—Enthusiasm for Organic Life—Mode of treating Classical Subjects—Perugino—His Pietistic Style—His Formalism—The Psychological Problem of his Life—Perugino's pupils—Pinturicchio—At Spello and Siena—Francia—Fra Bartolommeo—Transition to the Golden Age—Lionardo da Vinci—The Magician of the Renaissance—Raphael—The Melodist—Correggio—The Faun—Michael Angelo—The Prophet.*

THE Renaissance, so far as Painting is concerned, may be said to have culminated between the years 1470 and 1550. These dates, it must be frankly admitted, are arbitrary; nor is there anything more unprofitable than the attempt to define by strict chronology the moments of an intellectual growth so complex, so unequally progressive, and so varied as that of Italian art. All that the historian can hope to do, is to strike a mean between his reckoning of years and his more subtle calculations based on the emergence of decisive genius in special men. An instance of such compromise is afforded by Lionardo da Vinci, who belongs, as far as dates go, to the last half of the fifteenth century, but who must, on any estimate of his achievement, be classed with Michael Angelo among the final and supreme masters of the full Renaissance. To violate the order of time, with a view to what may here be called the morphology of Italian art, is, in his case, a plain duty.

Bearing this in mind, it is still possible to regard the eighty years above mentioned as a period no longer of promise and preparation but of fulfilment and accomplishment. Furthermore, the thirty years at the close of the fifteenth century may be taken as one epoch in this climax of the art, while the first half of the sixteenth forms a second. Within the former falls the best work of Mantegna, Perugino, Francia, the Bellini, Signorelli, Fra Bartolommeo. To the latter we may reckon Michael Angelo, Raphael, Giorgione, Correggio, Titian, and Andrea del Sarto. Lionardo da Vinci, though belonging chronologically to the former epoch, ranks first among the masters of the latter; and to this also may be given Tintoretto, though his life extended far beyond it to the last years of the century. We thus obtain, within the period of eighty years from 1470 to 1550, two subordinate divisions of time, the one including the last part of the fifteenth century, the other extending over the best years of the sixteenth.

The subdivisions I have just suggested correspond to two distinct stages in the evolution of art. The painters of the earlier group win our admiration quite as much by their aim as by their achievement. Their achievement, indeed, is not so perfect but that they still make some demand upon interpretative sympathy in the student. There is, besides, a sense of reserved strength in their work. We feel that their motives have not been developed to the utmost, that their inspiration is not exhausted; that it will be possible for their successors to advance beyond them on the same path, not realising more consummate excellence in special points, but combining divers qualities, and reaching absolute freedom.

The painters of the second group display mastery more perfect, range of faculty more all-embracing. What they design they do; nature and art obey them equally; the resources placed at their command are employed with facile and unfettered exercise of power. The hand obedient to the brain is now so expert that nothing further is left to be desired in the expression of the artist's thought.<sup>1</sup> The student can only hope to penetrate the master's meaning. To imagine a step further in the same direction is impossible. The full flower of the Italian genius has been unfolded. Its message to the world in art has been delivered.

Chronology alone would not justify us in drawing these distinctions. What really separates the two groups is the different degree in which they severally absorbed the spirit and uttered the message of their age. In the former the Renaissance was still immature, in the latter it was perfected. Yet all these painters deserve in a true sense to be called its children. Their common object is art regarded as an independent function, and relieved from the bondage of technical impediments. In their work the liberty of the modern mind finds its first and noblest expression. They deal with familiar and time-honoured Christian motives reverently; but they use them at the same time for the exhibition of pure human beauty. Pagan influences yield them spirit-stirring inspiration; yet the antique models of style, which proved no less embarrassing to their successors than Saul's armour was to David, weigh lightly, like a magician's breast-plate, upon their heroic strength.

Andrea Mantegna was born near Padua in 1431. Vasari says that in his boyhood he herded cattle, and it is probable that he was the son of a small Lombard farmer. What led him to the study of the arts we do not know; but that his talents were precociously developed, is proved by his registration in 1441 upon the books of the painter's guild at Padua. He is there described as the adopted son of Squarcione. At the age of seventeen he signed a picture with his name. Studying the casts and drawings collected by Squarcione for his Paduan school, the

<sup>1</sup> 'La man che ubbedisce all' intelletto' is a phrase pregnant with meaning, used by Michael Angelo in one of his sonnets. See Guasti, *Le Rime di Michael Angelo*, p. 173. Michael Angelo's blunt criticism of Perugino, that he was *goffo*, a fool in art, and his rude speech to Francia's handsome son, that his father made better forms by night than day, sufficiently indicate the different aims pursued by the painters of the two periods distinguished above.

young Mantegna found congenial exercise for his peculiar gifts.<sup>2</sup> His early frescoes in the Eremitani at Padua look as though they had been painted from statues or clay models, carefully selected for the grandeur of their forms, the nobility of their attitudes, and the complicated beauty of their drapery. The figures, arranged on different planes, are perfect in their perspective; the action is indicated by appropriate gestures, and the colouring, though faint and cold, is scientifically calculated. Yet not a man or woman in these wondrous compositions seems to live. Well provided with bone and muscle, they have neither blood nor anything suggestive of the breath of life within them. It is as though Mantegna had been called to paint a people turned to stone, arrested suddenly amid their various occupations, and preserved for centuries from injury in some Egyptian solitude of dewless sand.

In spite of this unearthly immobility, the Paduan frescoes exercise a strange and potent spell. We feel ourselves beneath the sway of a gigantic genius, intent on solving the severest problems of his art in preparation for the portraiture of some high intellectual abstraction. It should also be observed that notwithstanding their frigidity and statuesque composure, the pictures of 'S. Andrew' and 'S. Christopher' in the chapel of the Eremitani reveal minute study of real objects. Transitory movements of the body are noted and transcribed with merciless precision; an Italian hillside, with its olive trees and winding ways and crown of turrets, forms the background of one scene; in another the drama is localised amid Renaissance architecture of the costliest style. Rustic types have been selected for the soldiers, and commonplace details, down to a patched jerkin or a broken shoe, bear witness to the patience and the observation of the master. But over all these things the glamour of Medusa's head has fallen, turning them to stone. We are clearly in the presence of a painter for whom the attractions of nature were subordinated to the fascinations of science—a man the very opposite, for instance, to Benozzo Gozzoli. If Mantegna had passed away in early manhood, like Masaccio, his fame would have been that of a cold and calculating genius labouring after an ideal unrealised except in its dry formal elements.

The truth is that Mantegna's inspiration was derived from the antique.<sup>3</sup> The beauty of classical bas-relief entered deep into his soul and

<sup>2</sup> Though Mantegna seems to have owed all his training to Padua, it is impossible to regard him as what is called a Squarcionesque—one among the artistic hacks formed and employed by the Paduan *impresario* of third-rate painting. No other eagle like to him was reared in that nest. His greatness belonged to his own genius, assimilating from the meagre means of study within his reach those elements which enabled him to divine the spirit of the antique and to attempt its reproduction. In order to facilitate the explanation of the problem offered by his early command of style, it has been suggested with great show of reason that he received a strong impression from the work executed in bas-relief by Donatello for the church of S. Antonio at Padua. Thus Florentine influences helped to form even the original genius of this greatest of the Lombard masters.

<sup>3</sup> Vasari, vol. v. p. 163, may be consulted with regard to Mantegna's preference for the ideal of statuary when compared with natural beauty, as the model for a painter.

ruled his imagination. In later life he spent his acquired wealth in forming a collection of Greek and Roman antiquities.<sup>4</sup> He was, moreover, the friend of students, eagerly absorbing the knowledge brought to light by Ciriaco of Ancona, Flavio Biondo, and other antiquaries; and so completely did he assimilate the materials of scholarship, that the spirit of a Roman seemed to be re-incarnated in him. Thus, independently of his high value as a painter, he embodies for us in art that sincere passion for the ancient world which was the dominating intellectual impulse of his age.

The minute learning accumulated in the fifteenth century upon the subject of Roman military life found noble illustration in his frieze of 'Julius Cæsar's Triumph.'<sup>5</sup> Nor is this masterpiece a cold display of pedantry. The life we vainly look for in the frescoes of the Eremitani chapel may be found here—statuesque, indeed, in style, and stately in movement, but glowing with the spirit of revived antiquity. The processional pomp of legionaries bowed beneath their trophied arms, the monumental majesty of robed citizens, the gravity of stoled and veiled priests, the beauty of young slaves, and all the paraphernalia of spoils and wreaths and elephants and ensigns are massed together with the self-restraint of noble art subordinating pageantry to rules of lofty composition. What must the genius of the man have been who could move thus majestically beneath the weight of painfully accumulated erudition, converting an antiquarian motive into a theme for melodies of line composed in the grave Dorian mood?

By no process can the classic purity of this bas-relief be better understood than by comparing the original with a transcript made by Rubens from a portion of the 'Triumph.'<sup>6</sup> The Flemish painter strives to add richness to the scene by Bacchanalian riot and the sensuality of imperial Rome. His elephants twist their trunks, and trumpet to the din of cymbals; negroes feed the flaming candelabra with scattered frankincense; the white oxen of Clitumnus are loaded with gaudy flowers, and the dancing maidens are dishevelled Mænads. But the rhythmic procession of Mantegna, modulated to the sound of flutes and soft recorders, carries our imagination back to the best days and strength of Rome. His priests and generals, captives and choric women, are as little Greek as they are modern. In them awakes to a new life the spirit-quelling energy of the republic. The painter's severe taste keeps out of sight

<sup>4</sup> See Crowe and Cavalcaselle's *History of Painting in North Italy*, vol. i. p. 334, for an account of his antiquarian researches in company with Felice Feliciano. His museum was so famous that in 1483 Lorenzo de' Medici, passing through Mantua from Venice, thought it worthy of a visit. In his old age Mantegna fell into pecuniary difficulties, and had to part with his collection. The forced sale of its chief ornament, a bust of Faustina, is said to have broken his heart. *Ib.* p. 415.

<sup>5</sup> Painted on canvas in tempera for the Marquis of Mantua, before 1488, looted by the Germans in 1630, sold to Charles I., resold by the Commonwealth, bought back by Charles II., and now exposed, much spoiled by time and change, but more by villainous repainting, on the walls of Hampton Court.

<sup>6</sup> An oil painting in the National Gallery.

the insolence and orgies of the empire; he conceives Rome as Shakspeare did in 'Coriolanus.'<sup>7</sup>

In compositions of this type, studied after bas-reliefs and friezes, Mantegna displayed a power that was unique. Those who have once seen his drawings for Judith with the head of Holofernes, and for Solomon judging between the two mothers, will never forget their sculpture. The lines are graven on our memory. When this marble master chose to be tragic, his intensity was terrible. The designs for a dead Christ carried to the tomb among the weeping Maries, concentrate within the briefest space the utmost agony; it is as though the very ecstasy of grief had been congealed and fixed for ever. What, again, he could produce of purely beautiful within the region of religious art, is shown by his 'Madonna of the Victory.'<sup>8</sup> No other painter has given to the soldier saints forms at once so heroic and so chivalrously tender.

With regard to the circumstances of Mantegna's biography, it may be said briefly that, though of humble birth, he spent the greater portion of his life at Court and in the service of princes. It was in 1456, after he had distinguished himself by the Paduan frescoes, that he first received an invitation from the Marquis Lodovico Gonzaga. Of this sovereign I have already had occasion to speak.<sup>9</sup> Reared by Vittorino da Feltre, to whom his father had committed almost unlimited authority, Lodovico had early learned to estimate the real advantages of culture. It was now his object to render his capital no less illustrious by art than by the residence of learned men. With this view he offered Mantegna a salary of fifteen ducats a month, together with lodging, corn, and fuel—provided the painter would place his talents at his service. Mantegna accepted the invitation; but numerous engagements prevented him from transferring his household from Padua to Mantua until the year 1460. From that date onwards to 1506, when he died, Mantegna remained attached to the Gonzaga family serving three Marquises in succession, and adorning their palaces, chapels, and country-seats with frescoes now, alas! almost entirely ruined. The grants of land and presents he received in addition to his salary, enabled him to build a villa at Buscoldo, where he resided during the summer, as well as to erect a sumptuous mansion in the capital.

<sup>7</sup> The so-called 'Triumph of Scipio' in the National Gallery seems to me in every respect feebler than the Hampton Court Cartoons.

<sup>8</sup> The 'Madonna della Vittoria,' now in the Louvre Gallery, was painted to commemorate the achievements of Francesco Gonzaga in the battle of Fornovo. That Francesco, General of the Venetian troops, should have claimed that action, the eternal disgrace of Italian soldiery, for a victory, is one of the strongest signs of the depth to which the sense of military honour had sunk in Italy. But though the occasion of its painting was so mean, the impression made by this picture is too powerful to be described. It is in every detail grandiose: masculine energy being combined with incomparable grace, religious feeling with athletic dignity, and luxuriance of ornamentation with severe gravity of composition. It is worth comparing this portrait of Francesco Gonzaga with his bronze medal, just as Piero della Francesca's picture of Sigismondo Malatesta should be compared with Pisanello's medallion.

<sup>9</sup> *Revival of Learning*, p. 463.

Between Mantua, Goito, and Buscoldo, Mantegna spent the last forty-six years of his life in continual employment, broken only by a short visit to Florence in 1466, and another to Bologna in 1472,<sup>10</sup> and by a longer residence in Rome between the years 1488 and 1490. During the latter period Innocent VIII. was Pope. He had built a chapel in the Belvedere of the Vatican, and wished the greatest painter of the day to decorate it. Therefore he wrote to Francesco, Marquis of Mantua, requesting that he might avail himself of Mantegna's skill. Francesco, though unwilling to part with his painter in ordinary, thought it unadvisable to disappoint the Pope. Accordingly he dubbed Mantegna knight, and sent him to Rome. The chapel painted in fresco for Innocent was ruthlessly destroyed by Pius VI.; and thus the world has lost one of Mantegna's masterpieces, executed while his genius was at its zenith. On his return to Mantua he finished the decorations of the Castello of the Gonzaghi, and completed his greatest surviving work, the 'Triumph of Julius Cæsar.'

By his wife, Nicolosia, the sister of Giovanni and Gentile Bellini, Mantegna had several children, one of whom, Francesco, adopted painting as a trade. The great artist was by temper arrogant and haughty; nor could he succeed in living peaceably with any of his neighbours. It appears that he spent habitually more money than he could well afford, freely indulging his taste for magnificence, and disbursing large sums in the purchase of curiosities. Long before his death his estate had been involved in debt; and after his decease, his sons were forced to sell the pictures in his studio for the payment of pressing creditors. He was buried in Alberti's church of S. Andrea at Mantua, in a chapel decorated at his own expense. Over the grave was placed a bronze bust, most noble in modelling and perfect in execution. The broad forehead with its deeply cloven furrows, the stern and piercing eyes, the large lips compressed with nervous energy, the massive nose, the strength of jaw and chin, and the superb clusters of the hair escaping from a laurel-wreath upon the royal head, are such as realise for us our notion of a Roman in the days of the Republic. Mantegna's own genius has inspired this masterpiece, which tradition assigns to the medallist Sperando Maglioli. Whoever wrought it, must have felt the incubation of the mighty painter's spirit, and have striven to express in bronze the character of his uncompromising art.

Of a different temperament, yet not wholly unlike Mantegna in a certain iron strength of artistic character, was Luca Signorelli, born about 1441 at Cortona. The supreme quality of Mantegna was studied purity of outline, severe and heightened style. As Landor is distinguished by concentration above all the English poets who have made trial of the classic Muse, so Mantegna holds a place apart among Italian painters

<sup>10</sup> Nothing is known about Mantegna's stay in Florence. He went to meet the Cardinal Francesco Gonzaga at Bologna. This Cardinal, a great amateur of music and connoisseur in relics of antiquity, came to Mantua in August, 1472, where the 'Orfeo' of Messer Angelo Poliziano was produced for his amusement.

because of his stern Roman self-control. Signorelli, on the contrary, made his mark by boldness, pushing experiment almost beyond the verge of truth, and approaching Michael Angelo in the hardihood of his endeavour to outdo nature. Vasari says of him, that 'even Michael Angelo imitated the manner of Luca, as every one can see,' and indeed Signorelli anticipated the greatest master of the sixteenth century, not only in his profound study of human anatomy, but also in his resolution to express high thought and tragic passion by pure form, discarding all the minor charms of painting. Trained in the severe school of Piero della Francesca, he early learned to draw from the nude with boldness and accuracy; and to this point, too much neglected by his predecessors, he devoted the full powers of his maturity. Anatomy he practised, according to the custom of those days, in the graveyard or beneath the gibbet. There is a drawing by him in the Louvre of a stalwart man carrying upon his back the corpse of a youth. Both are naked. The motive seems to have been taken from some lazaret-house. Life-long study of perspective in its application to the drawing of the figure, made the difficulties of foreshortening and the delineation of brusque attitude mere child's play to this audacious genius. The most rapid movement, the most perilous contortion of bodies falling through the air or flying, he depicted with hard, firmly-traced, unerring outline. If we dare to criticise the productions of a master so original and so accomplished, all we can say is that Signorelli revelled almost too wantonly in the display of hazardous posture, and that he sacrificed the passion of his theme to the display of science.<sup>11</sup> Yet his genius comprehended great and tragic subjects, and to him belongs the credit in an age of ornament and pedantry of having made the human body a language for the utterance of all that is most weighty in the thought of man.

A story is told by Vasari which brings Signorelli very close to our sympathy, and enables us to understand the fascination of pure form he felt so deeply. 'It is related of Luca that he had a son killed at Cortona, a youth of singular beauty in face and person, whom he had tenderly loved. In his grief the father caused the boy to be stripped naked, and with extraordinary constancy of soul, uttering no complaint and shedding no tear, he painted the portrait of his dead son, to the end that he might still be able, through the work of his own hand, to contemplate that which nature had given him, but which an adverse fortune had taken away.' So passionate and ardent, so convinced of the indissoluble bond between the soul he loved in life and its dead tenement of clay, and withal so iron-nerved and stout of will, it behoved that man to be, who undertook in the plenitude of his power, at the age of sixty, to paint upon the walls of the chapel of S. Brizio at Orvieto the images of Doomsday, Resurrection, Heaven, and Hell.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> That he could conceive a stern and tragic subject, with all the passions it required, is, however, proved not only by the frescoes at Orvieto, but also by the powerful oil-painting of the 'Crucifixion' at Borgo San Sepolcro.

<sup>12</sup> This story has been used for verse in a way to heighten its romantic colouring. Such as the lines are, I subjoin them for the sake of their attempt to emphasize and



It is a gloomy chapel in the Gothic cathedral of that forlorn Papal city—gloomy by reason of bad lighting, but more so because of the terrible shapes with which Signorelli has filled it.<sup>13</sup> In no other work of the Italian Renaissance, except in the Sistine Chapel, has so much thought, engaged upon the most momentous subjects, been expressed with greater force by means more simple and with effect more overwhelming. Architecture, landscape, and decorative accessories of every kind, the usual padding of *quattrocento* pictures, have been discarded from the main compositions. The painter has relied solely upon his power of imagining and delineating the human form in every attitude, and under the most various conditions. Darting like hawks or swallows through the air, huddling together to shun the outpoured vials of the wrath of God, writhing with demons on the floor of Hell, struggling into new life from the clinging clay, standing beneath the footstool of the Judge, floating with lute and viol on the winds of Paradise, kneeling in prayer, or clasping 'inseparable hands with joy and bliss in overmeasure for ever'—these multitudes of living beings, angelic, diabolic, bestial, human, crowd the huge spaces of the chapel walls. What makes the impression of controlling doom the more appalling, is that we comprehend the drama in its several scenes, while the chief actor, the divine Judge, at whose bidding the cherubs sound their clarions, and the dead arise, and weal and woe are portioned to the saved and damned, is Himself unrepresented.<sup>14</sup> We breathe in the presence of embodied

illustrate Renaissance feeling:—

'Vasari tells that Luca Signorelli,  
The morning star of Michael Angelo,  
Had but one son, a youth of seventeen summers,  
Who died. That day the master at his easel  
Wielded the liberal brush wherewith he painted  
At Orvieto, on the Duomo's walls,  
Stern forms of Death and Heaven and Hell and Judgment.  
Then came they to him, cried: "Thy son is dead,  
Slain in a duel: but the bloom of life  
Yet lingers round red lips and downy cheek."  
Luca spoke not, but listened. Next they bore  
His dead son to the silent painting-room,  
And left on tip-toe son and sire alone.  
Still Luca spoke and groaned not; but he raised  
The wonderful dead youth, and smoothed his hair,  
Washed his red wounds, and laid him on a bed,  
Naked and beautiful, where rosy curtains  
Shed a soft glimmer of uncertain splendour  
Life-like upon the marble limbs below.  
Then Luca seized his palette: hour by hour  
Silence was in the room; none durst approach:  
Morn wore to noon, and noon to eve, when shyly  
A little maid peeped in and saw the painter  
Painting his dead son with unerring hand-stroke,  
Firm and dry-eyed before the lordly canvas.'

<sup>13</sup> See the article on Orvieto in my *Sketches in Italy and Greece*.

<sup>14</sup> The earlier frescoes of Fra Angelico, on the roof, depict Christ as Judge. But there is nothing in common with these works and Signorelli's.

consciences, submitting, like our own, to an unseen inevitable will.

It would be doing Signorelli injustice at Orvieto to study only these great panels. The details with which he has filled all the vacant spaces above the chapel stalls and round the doorway, throw new light upon his power. The ostensible motive for this elaborate ornamentation is contained in the portraits of six poets, who are probably Homer, Virgil, Lucan, Horace, Ovid, and Dante, *il sesto tra cotanto senno*.<sup>15</sup> But the portraits themselves, though vigorously conceived and remarkable for bold foreshortening, are the least part of the whole design. Its originality consists in the arabesques, medallions, and *chiaroscuro* bas-reliefs, where the human form, treated as absolutely plastic, supplies the sole decorative element. The pilasters by the doorway, for example, are composed, after the usual type of Italian *groteschi*, in imitation of antique candelabra, with numerous stages for the exhibition of the artist's fancies. Unlike the work of Raphael in the Loggie, these pilasters of Signorelli show no birds or beasts, no flowers or foliage, fruits or fauns, no masks or sphinxes. They are crowded with naked men—drinking, dancing, leaning forward, twisting themselves into strange attitudes, and adapting their bodies to the several degrees of the framework. The same may be said of the arabesques around the portraits of the poets, where men, women, and children, some complete, some ending in foliage or in fish-tails, are lavished with a wild and terrible profusion. Hippogriffs and centaurs, sirens and dolphins, are here used as adjuncts to humanity. Amid this fantastic labyrinth of twisted forms we find medallions painted in *chiaroscuro* with subjects taken chiefly from Ovidian and Dantesque mythology. Here every attitude of men in combat and in motion has been studied from the nude, and multitudes of figures draped and undraped are compressed into the briefest compass. All but the human form is sternly eliminated; and the body itself is treated with a mastery and a boldness that prove Signorelli to have held its varied capabilities firmly in his brain. He could not have worked out all those postures from the living model. He played freely with his immense stores of knowledge; but his play was the pastime of a Prometheus. Each pose, however hazardous, carries conviction with it of sincerity and truth; the life and liberty of nature reign throughout. From the whole maze of interlaced and wrestling figures the terrible nature of the artist's genius shines forth. They are almost all strong men in the prime or past the prime of life, chosen for their salient display of vital structure. Signorelli was the first, and, with the exception of Michael Angelo, the last painter thus to use the body, without senti-

<sup>15</sup> This is the conjecture of Signor Luzi (*Il Duomo di Orvieto*, p. 168). He bases it upon the Dantesque subjects illustrated, and quotes from the 'Inferno':—

'Omero poeta sovrano;  
L'altro è Orazio satiro che viene,  
Ovidio è il terzo, e l'ultimo Lucano.'

Nothing is more marked or more deeply interesting than the influence exercised by Dante over Signorelli, an influence he shared with Giotto, Orcagna, Botticelli, Michael Angelo, the greatest imaginative painters of Central Italy.

ment, without voluptuousness, without any second intention whatsoever, as the supreme decorative principle. In his absolute sincerity he made, as it were, a parade of hard and rugged types, scorning to introduce an element of beauty, whether sensuous or ideal, that should distract him from the study of the body in and for itself. This distinguishes him in the arabesques at Orvieto alike from Mantegna and Michael Angelo, from Correggio and Raphael, from Titian and Paolo Veronese.

This point is so important for its bearing on Renaissance art that I may be permitted to dilate at greater length on Signorelli's choice of types and treatment of form in general. Having a special predilection for the human body, he by no means confined himself to monotony in its presentation. On the contrary, we can trace many distinct grades of corporeal expression. First comes the abstract nude, illustrated by the 'Resurrection' and the arabesques at Orvieto.<sup>16</sup> Contemporary life, with all its pomp of costume and insolence of ruffling youth, is depicted in the 'Fulminati' at Orvieto and in the 'Soldiers of Totila' at Monte Oliveto.<sup>17</sup> These transcripts from the courts of princes and camps of condottieri are invaluable as portraits of the lawless young men who filled Italy with the noise of their feuds and the violence of their adventures. They illustrate Matarazzo's Perugian chronicle better than any other Renaissance pictures; for in frescoes like those of Pinturicchio at Siena the same qualities are softened to suit the painter's predetermined harmony, whereas Signorelli rejoices in their pure untempered character.<sup>18</sup> These, then, form a second stage. Third in degree we find the type of highly idealised adolescence reserved by Signorelli for his angels. All his science and his sympathy with real life are here subordinated to poetic feeling. It is a mistake to say that these angels are the young men of Umbria whom he loved to paint in their striped jackets, with the addition of wings to their shoulders. The radiant beings who tune their citherns on the louds of Paradise, or scatter roses for elect souls, could not live and breathe in the fiery atmosphere of sensuous passions to which the Baglioni were habituated. A grave and solemn sense of beauty animates these fair male beings, clothed in voluminous drapery, with youthful faces and still earnest eyes. Their melody, like that of Milton, is severe. Nor are Signorelli's angelic beings of one uniform type like the angels of Fra Angelico. The athletic cherubs of the 'Resurrection,' breathing their whole strength into the trumpets that awake the dead; the mailed and winged warriors, keeping guard above the pit of 'Hell,' that none may break their prison-bars among the damned; the lute-players of 'Paradise,' with their almost feminine sobriety of movement; the flame-breathing seraphs of the day of doom;

<sup>16</sup> The background to the circular 'Madonna' in the Uffizzi, the 'Flagellation of Christ' in the Academy at Florence and in the Brera at Milan, and the 'Adam' at Cortona, belong to this grade.

<sup>17</sup> We may add the pages in a predella representing the 'Adoration of the Magi' in the Uffizzi.

<sup>18</sup> Vasari mentions the portraits of Nicolo, Paolo, and Vitellozzo Vitelli, Gian Paolo, and Orazio Baglioni, among others, in the frescoes at Orvieto.

the 'Gabriel' of Volterra, in whom strength is translated into swiftness:—these are the heralds, sentinels, musicians, executioners, and messengers of the celestial court; and each class is distinguished by appropriate physical characteristics. At the other end of the scale, forming a fourth grade, we may mention the depraved types of humanity chosen for his demons—those greenish, reddish, ochreish fiends of the 'Inferno,' whom Signorelli created by exaggerating the more grotesque qualities of the nude developed in his arabesques. We thus obtain four several degrees of form: the demoniac, the abstract nude, the adolescent beauty of young men copied from choice models, and the angelic.

Except in his angels, Signorelli was comparatively indifferent to what is commonly considered beauty. He was not careful to select his models, or to idealise their type. The naked human body, apart from facial distinction or refinement of form, contented him. Violent contrasts of light and shadow, accentuating the anatomical structure with rough and angular decision, give the effect of illustrative diagrams to his studies. Harmony of proportion and the magic of expression are sacrificed to energy emergent in a powerful physique. Redundant life, in sinewy limbs, in the proud carriage of the head upon the neck, in the sway of the trunk backward from the reins, the firmly planted calves and brawny thighs, the thick hair, broad shoulders, spare flanks, and massive gluteal muscles of a man of twenty-two or upwards, whose growth has been confined to the development of animal force, was what delighted him. Yet there is no coarseness or animalism properly so called in his style. He was attracted by the marvellous mechanism of the human frame—its goodness regarded as the most highly organised of animate existences.

Owing, perhaps, to this exclusive predilection for organic life, Signorelli was not great as a colourist. His patches of blues and reds in the frescoes of Monte Oliveto are oppressively distinct; his use of dull brown for the shading of flesh imparts a disagreeable heaviness to his best modelled forms; nor did he often attain in his oil pictures to that grave harmony we admire in his 'Last Supper' at Cortona. The world of light and colour was to him a comparatively untravelled land. It remained for other artists to raise these elements of pictorial expression to the height reached by Signorelli in his treatment of the nude.

Before quitting the frescoes at Orvieto, some attention should be paid to the medallions spoken of above, in special relation to the classicism of the earlier Renaissance. Scenes from Dante's 'Purgatorio' and subjects from the 'Metamorphoses' of Ovid are treated here in the same key; but the latter, since they engaged Signorelli's fancy upon Greek mythology, are the more important for our purpose. Two from the legend of 'Orpheus' and two from that of 'Proserpine' might be chosen as typical of the whole series. Mediæval intensity, curiously at variance with antique feeling, is discernible throughout. The satellites of Hades are gaunt and sinewy devils, eager to do violence to Eurydice. Pluto himself drives his jarring car-wheels up through the lava-blocks

and flames of Etna with a fury and a vehemence we seek in vain upon antique sarcophagi. Ceres, wandering through Sicily in search of her lost daughter, is a gaunt witch with dishevelled hair, raising frantic hands to tear her cheeks; while the snakes that draw her chariot are no grave symbols of the germinating corn, but greedy serpents ready to spit fire against the ravishers of Proserpine. Thus the tranquillity and self-restraint of Greek art yield to a passionate and trenchant realisation of the actual romance. The most thrilling moments in the legend are selected for dramatic treatment, grace and beauty being exchanged for vivid presentation. A whole cycle of human experience separates these medallions from the antique bas-relief at Naples, where Hermes hands the veiled Eurydice to Orpheus, and all three are calm. That Signorelli, if he chose to do so, could represent a classic myth with more of classic feeling, is shown by his picture of 'Pan Listening to Olympus.'<sup>19</sup> The nymph, the vineleaf-girdled Faun, and the two shepherds, all undraped and drawn with subtle feeling for the melodies of line, render this work one of his most successful compositions.

It would be interesting to compare Signorelli's treatment of the antique with Mantegna's or Botticelli's. The visions of the pagan world, floating before the mind of all men in the fifteenth century, found very different interpreters in these three painters—Botticelli adding the quaint alloy of his own fancy, Signorelli imparting the semi-savagery of a terrible imagination, Mantegna, with the truest instinct and the firmest touch, confining himself to the processional pageantry of bas-relief. Yet, were this comparison to be instituted, we could hardly refrain from carrying it much further. Each great master of the Renaissance had his own relation to classical mythology. The mystic sympathies of 'Leda and the Swan,' as imaged severally by Lionardo and Michael Angelo; Correggio's romantic handling of the myths of 'Danaë' and 'Io;' Titian's and Tintoretto's rival pictures of 'Bacchus and Ariadne;' Raphael's 'Galatea;' Pollajuolo's 'Hercules;' the 'Europa' of Veronese; the 'Circe' of Dosso Dossi; Palma's 'Venus;' Sodoma's 'Marriage of Alexander'—all these, to mention none but pictures familiar to every traveller in Italy, raise for the student of the classical Revival absorbing questions relative to the influences of pagan myths upon the modern imagination.

Signorelli was chiefly occupied, during the course of his long career, upon religious pictures; and the high place he occupies in the history of Renaissance culture is due partly to his free abandonment of conventional methods in treating sacred subjects. The Uffizzi Gallery contains a circular 'Madonna' by his hand, with a row of naked men for background—the forerunner of Michael Angelo's famous 'Holy Family.' So far had art for art's sake already encroached upon the ecclesiastical domain. To discuss Signorelli's merits as a painter of altarpieces would be to extend the space allotted to him far beyond its proper limits. It

<sup>19</sup> Painted for Lorenzo de' Medici. It is now in the Berlin Museum through the neglect of the National Gallery authorities to purchase it for England.

is not as a religious artist that he takes his rank, but as having powerfully promoted the rehabilitation of the body achieved for art by the Renaissance.

Unlike Mantegna, Signorelli never entered the service of a prince, though we have seen that he executed commissions for Lorenzo de' Medici and Pandolfo Petrucci. He bore a name which, if not noble, had been more than once distinguished in the annals of Tuscany. Residing at his native place, Cortona, he there enjoyed the highest reputation, and was frequently elected to municipal office. Concerning his domestic life very little is known, but what we do know is derived from an excellent source.<sup>20</sup> His mother was the sister of Lazzaro, great-grandfather of Giorgio Vasari. In his biography of Signorelli, Vasari relates how, when he was himself a boy of eight, his illustrious cousin visited the house of the Vasari family at Arezzo; and hearing from little Giorgio's grammar-master that he spent his time in drawing figures, Luca turned to the child's father and said, 'Antonio, since Giorgio takes after his family, you must by all means have him taught; for even though he should pay attention to literature as well, drawing cannot fail to be a source of utility, honour, and recreation to him, as it is to every man of worth.' Luca's kindness deeply impressed the boy, who afterwards wrote the following description of his personal qualities: 'He was a man of the most excellent habits, sincere and affectionate with his friends, sweet of conversation and amusing in society, above all things courteous to those who had need of his work, and easy in giving instruction to his pupils. He lived splendidly, and took delight in dressing handsomely. This excellent disposition caused him to be always held in highest veneration both in his own city and abroad.'

To turn from Signorelli to Perugino is to plunge at once into a very different atmosphere.<sup>21</sup> It is like quitting the rugged gorges of high mountains for a valley of the Southern Alps—still, pensive, beautiful, and coloured with reflections from an evening sky. Perugino knew exactly how to represent a certain mood of religious sentiment, blending meek acquiescence with a prayerful yearning of the impassioned soul. His Madonnas worshipping the infant Jesus in a tranquil Umbrian landscape, his angels ministrant, his pathetic martyrs with upturned holy faces, his sexless S. Sebastians and immaculate S. Michaels, display the perfection of art able by colour and by form to achieve within a narrow

<sup>20</sup> I must not omit to qualify Vasari's praise of Luca Signorelli, by reference to a letter recently published from the *Archivio Buonarroti, Lettere a Diversi*, p. 391. Michael Angelo there addresses the Captain of Cortona, and complains that in the first year of Leo's pontificate Luca came to him and by various representations obtained from him the sum of eighty Giulios, which he never repaid, although he made profession to have done so. Michael Angelo was ill at the time, and working with much difficulty on a statue of a bound captive for the tomb of Julius. Luca gave a specimen of his renowned courtesy by comforting the sculptor in these rather sanctimonious phrases: 'Doubt not that angels will come from heaven, to support your arms and help you.'

<sup>21</sup> Pietro, known as Perugino from the city of his adoption, was the son of Cristoforo Vannucci, of Città della Pieve. He was born in 1446, and died at Fontignano in 1522.

range what it desires. What this artist seems to have aimed at, was to create for the soul amid the pomps and passions of this world a resting-place of contemplation tenanted by saintly and seraphic beings. No pain comes near the folk of his celestial city; no longing poisons their repose; they are not weary, and the wicked trouble them no more. Their cheerfulness is no less perfect than their serenity; like the shades of Hellas, they have drunk Lethean waters from the river of content, and all remembrance of things sad or harsh has vanished from their minds. The quietude of holiness expressed in this ideal region was a legacy to Perugino from earlier Umbrian masters; but his technical supremacy in fresco-painting and in oils, his correct drawing within certain limits, and his refined sense of colour enabled him to realise it more completely than his less accomplished predecessors. In his best work the Renaissance set the seal of absolute perfection upon pietistic art.

We English are fortunate in possessing one of Perugino's sincerest devotional oil pictures.<sup>22</sup> His frescoes of 'S. Sebastian' at Panicale, and of the 'Crucifixion' at Florence, are tolerably well known through reproductions;<sup>23</sup> while the 'Vision of S. Bernard' at Munich and the 'Pietà' in the Pitti Gallery are familiar to all travelled students of Italian painting. These masterpieces belong to Perugino's best period, when his inspiration was fresh, and his enthusiasm for artistic excellence was still unimpaired; and when, as M. Rio thinks, the failure of his faith had not yet happened. It is only at Perugia, however, in the Sala del Cambio, that we are able to gauge the extent of his power and to estimate the value of his achievement beyond the pale of strictly religious themes.

Early in the course of his career Perugino seems to have become contented with a formal repetition of successful motives, and to have checked the growth of his genius by adhering closely to a prescribed cycle of effects. The praises of his patrons and the prosperity of his trade proved to his keen commercial sense that the raised ecstatic eyes, the upturned oval faces, the pale olive skin, the head inclined upon the shoulder, the thin fluttering hair, the ribands and the dainty dresses of his holy persons found great favour in Umbrian palaces and convents. Thenceforward he painted but little else; and when, in the Sala del Cambio, he was obliged to treat the representative heroes of Greek and Roman story, he adopted the same manner.<sup>24</sup> Leonidas, the lion-hearted Spartan, and Cato, the austere Roman, who preferred liberty to life, bend their mild heads like flowers in Perugino's frescoes, and gather up their drapery in studied folds with celestial delicacy. Jove is a reproduction of the Eterno Padre, conceived as a benevolent old man for a conventional painting of the 'Trinity;' and Ganymede is a

<sup>22</sup> The triptych in the National Gallery.

<sup>23</sup> They have been published by the Arundel Society.

<sup>24</sup> These frescoes were begun in 1499. It may be mentioned that in this year, on the refusal of Perugino to decorate the Cappella di S. Brizio, the Orvietans entrusted that work to Signorelli.



page-boy with the sweet submissive features of Tobias. Already Perugino had opened a manufactory of pietistic pictures, and was employing many pupils on his works. He coined money by fixing artificially beautiful faces upon artificially elegant figures, placing a row of these puppets in a landscape with calm sky behind them, and calling the composition by the name of some familiar scene. His inspiration was dead, his invention exhausted; his chief object seemed to be to make his trade thrive.

Perugino will always remain a problem to the psychologist who believes in physiognomy, as well as to the student of the passionate times in which he lived. His hard unsympathetic features in the portraits at Perugia and Florence do not belie, but rather win credence for Vasari's tales about his sordid soul.<sup>25</sup> Local traditions and contemporary rumours, again, give colour to what Vasari relates about his infidelity; while the criminal records of Florence prove that he was not over-scrupulous to keep his hands from violence.<sup>26</sup> How could such a man, we ask ourselves, have endured to pass a long life in the fabrication of devotional pictures? Whence did he derive the sentiment of masterpieces, for piety only equalled by those of Fra Angelico, either in his own nature or in the society of a city torn to pieces by the factions of the Baglioni? How, again, was it possible for an artist who at times touched beauty so ideal, to be contented with the stencilling by his pupils of conventional figures on canvases to which he gave his name? Taking these questions separately, we might reply that 'there is no art to find the mind's construction in the face;' that painting in the sixteenth century was a trade regulated by the demand for particular wares; that men can live among ruffians without sharing their mood; that the artist and the moral being are separate, and may not be used to interpret each other. Yet, after giving due weight to such answers, Perugino, being what he was, living at the time he did, not as a recluse, but as a prosperous *impresario* of painting, and systematically devoting his powers to pietistic art, must be for us a puzzle. That the quietism of his highly artificial style should have been fashionable in Perugia, while the Baglioni were tearing each other to pieces, and the troops of

<sup>25</sup> Uffizzi and Sala del Cambio.

<sup>26</sup> 'Fu Pietro persona di assai poca religione, e non se gli potè mai far credere l'immortalità dell' anima: anzi, con parole, accomodate al suo cervello di porfido, ostinatissimamente ricusò ogni buona vita. Aveva ogni sua speranza ne' beni della fortuna, e per danari arebbe fatto ogni male contratto.' Vasari, vol. vi. p. 50. The local tradition alluded to above relates to the difficulties raised by the Church against the Christian burial of Perugino: but if he died of plague, as it is believed (see C. and C., vol. iii. p. 244), these difficulties were probably caused by panic rather than belief in his impiety. For Gasparo Celio's note on Perugino's refusal to confess upon his death-bed, saying that he preferred to see how an impenitent soul would fare in the other world, the reader may consult Rio's *L'Art Chrétien*, vol. ii. p. 269. The record of Perugino's arming himself in Dec. 1486, together with a notorious assassin, Aulista di Angelo of Perugia, in order to waylay and beat a private enemy of his near S. Pietro Maggiore at Florence is quoted by Crowe and Cavalcaselle, vol. iii. p. 183.

the Vitelli and the Borgia were trampling upon Umbria, is one of the most striking paradoxes of an age rich in dramatic contradictions.

It is much to be regretted, with a view to solving the question of Perugino's personality in relation to his art, that his character does not emerge with any salience from the meagre notices we have received concerning him, and that we know but little of his private life. Vasari tells us that he married a very beautiful girl, and that one of his chief pleasures was to see this wife handsomely dressed at home and abroad. He often decked her out in clothes and jewels with his own hand. For the rest, we find in Perugino, far more than in either Mantegna or Signorelli, an instance of the simple Italian craftsman, employing numerous assistants, undertaking contract work on a large scale, and striking keen bargains with his employers. Both at Florence and at Perugia he opened a *bottega*; and by the exercise of his trade as a master-painter, he realised enough money to buy substantial estates in those cities, as well as in his birthplace.<sup>27</sup> In all the greatest art-works of the age he took his part. Thus we find him painting in the Sistine Chapel between 1484 and 1486, treating with the commune of Orvieto for the completion of the chapel of S. Brizio in 1489, joining in the debate upon the façade of S. Maria del Fiore in 1491, giving his opinion upon the erection of Michael Angelo's 'David' at Florence in 1504, and competing with Signorelli, Pinturicchio, and Bazzi for the decoration of the Stanze of the Vatican in 1508. The rising of brighter stars above the horizon during his life-time somewhat dimmed his fame, and caused him much disquietude; yet neither Raphael nor Michael Angelo interfered with the demand for his pictures, which continued to be lively till the very year of his death. That he was jealous of these younger rivals, appears from the fact that he brought an action against Michael Angelo for having called his style stupid and antiquated. In the celebrated phrase cast at him by the blunt and scornful master of a new art-mystery,<sup>28</sup> we discern the abrupt line of division between time-honoured tradition and the *maniera moderna* of the full Renaissance. The old Titans had to yield their place before the new Olympian deities of Italian painting. There is something pathetic in the retirement of the grey-haired Perugino from Rome, to make way for the victorious Phœbean beauty of the boy Raphael.

The influence of Perugino upon Italian art was powerful though transitory. He formed a band of able pupils, among whom was the great Raphael; and though Raphael speedily abandoned his master's narrow footpath through the fields of painting, he owed to Perugino the invaluable benefit of training in solid technical methods and traditions of pure taste. From none of his elder contemporaries, with the exception of Fra Bartolommeo, could the young Raphael have learnt so much that was congenial to his early instincts. What, for example, might

<sup>27</sup> 'Guadagnò molte ricchezze; e in Fiorenza murò e comprò case; ed in Perugia ed a Castello della Pieve acquistò molti beni stabili.' Vasari, vol. vi. p. 50.

<sup>28</sup> 'Goffo nell' arte.' See Vasari, vol. vi. p. 46. See too above, p. 710.

have befallen him if he had worked with Signorelli, it is difficult to imagine; for while nothing is more obvious on the one hand than Raphael's originality, his strong assimilative bias is scarcely less remarkable. The time has not yet come to speak of Raphael; nor will space suffice for detailed observations on his fellow-students in the workshop at Perugia. The place occupied by Perugino in the evolution of Italian painting is peculiar. In the middle of a positive and worldly age, declining fast to frigid scepticism and political corruption, he set the final touch of technical art upon the devotion transmitted from earlier and more enthusiastic centuries. The flower of Umbrian piety blossomed in the masterpieces of his youth, and faded into dryness in the affectations of his manhood. Nothing was left on the same line for his successors.

Among these, Bernardo Pinturicchio can here alone be mentioned. A thorough naturalist, though saturated with the mannerism of the Umbrian school, Pinturicchio was not distracted either by scientific or ideal aims from the clear and fluent presentation of contemporary manners and costumes. He is a kind of Umbrian Gozzoli, who brings us here and there in close relation to the men of his own time, and has in consequence a special value for the student of Renaissance life. His wall-paintings in the library of the cathedral of Siena are so well preserved that we need not seek elsewhere for better specimens of the decorative art most highly prized in the first years of the sixteenth century.<sup>29</sup> These frescoes have a richness of effect and a vivacity of natural action, which, in spite of their superficiality, render them highly charming. The life of Æneas Sylvius Piccolomini, Pius II., is here treated like a legend. There is no attempt at representing the dress of half a century anterior to the painter's date, or at rendering accurate historic portraiture. Both Pope and Emperor are romantically conceived, and each portion of the tale is told as though it were a fit in some popular ballad. So much remains of Perugian affectation as gives a kind of childlike grace to the studied attitudes and many-coloured groups of elegant young men.

We must always be careful to distinguish the importance of an artist considered as the exponent of his age from that which he may claim by virtue of some special skill or some peculiar quality of feeling. The art of Perugino, for example, throws but little light upon the Renaissance taken as a whole. Intrinsically valuable because of its technical perfection and its purity of sentiment, it was already in the painter's lifetime superseded by a larger and a grander manner. The progressive forces of the modern style found their channels outside him. This again is true of Francesco Raibolini, surnamed Francia from his master in the goldsmith's craft. Francia is known to Englishmen as one of the most sincerely pious of Christian painters by his incomparable picture of the 'Dead Christ' in our National Gallery. The spirituality that renders Fra Angelico unintelligible to minds less ecstatically tem-

<sup>29</sup> I select these for comment rather than the frescoes at Spello, beautiful as these are, because they have more interest in relation to the style of the Renaissance.

pered than his own, is not found in such excess in Francia, nor does his work suffer from the insipidity of Perugino's affectation. Deep religious feeling is combined with physical beauty of the purest type in a masterpiece of tranquil grace. A greater degree of *naïveté* and naturalness compensates for the inferiority of Francia's to Perugino's supremely perfect handling. This is true of Francia's numerous pictures at Bologna; where indeed, in order to be rightly known, he should be studied by all lovers of the *quattrocento* style in its most delightful moments.<sup>30</sup> For mastery over oil painting and for charm of colour Francia challenges comparison with what is best in Perugino, though he did not quite attain the same technical excellence.

One more painter must delay us yet awhile within the limits of the fifteenth century. Bartolommeo di Paolo del Fattorino, better known as Baccio della Porta or Fra Bartolommeo, forms at Florence the connecting link between the artists of the earlier Renaissance and the golden age.<sup>31</sup> By chronological reckoning he is nearly a quarter of a century later than Lionardo da Vinci, and is the exact contemporary of Michael Angelo. As an artist, he has thoroughly outgrown the *quattrocento* style, and falls short only by a little of the greatest. In assigning him a place among the predecessors and precursors of the full Renaissance, I am therefore influenced rather by the range of subjects he selected, and by the character of his genius, than by calculations of time or estimate of ability.

Fra Bartolommeo was sent, when nine years old, into the workshop of Cosimo Rosselli, where he began his artist's life by colour-grinding, sweeping out the shop, and errand-running. It was in Cosimo's *bottega* that he made acquaintance with Mariotto Albertinelli, who became his intimate friend and fellow-worker. In spite of marked differences of character, disagreements upon the fundamental matters of politics and religion, and not unfrequent quarrels, these men continued to be comrades through the better part of their joint lives. Baccio was gentle, timid, yielding, and industrious. Mariotto was wilful, obstinate, inconsistent, and flighty. Baccio fell under the influence of Savonarola, professed himself a *piagnone*, and took the cowl of the Dominicans.<sup>32</sup> Mariotto was a partisan of the Medici, an uproarious *pallesco*, and a loose liver, who eventually deserted the art of painting for the calling of an innkeeper. Yet so sweet was the temper of the Frate, and so firm was the bond of friendship established in boyhood between this ill-assorted couple, that they did not part company until 1512, three years before Mariotto's death and five before that of Bartolommeo. During their long association the task of designing fell upon the Frate, while Albertinelli took his orders and helped to work out his conceptions.

<sup>30</sup> The 'Assumption' in S. Frediano at Lucca should also be mentioned as one of Francia's masterpieces.

<sup>31</sup> His father was a muleteer of Suffignano, who settled at Florence, in a house and garden near the gate of S. Piero Gattolino. He was born in 1475, and he died in 1517.

<sup>32</sup> In S. Domenico at Prato in 1500. He afterwards resided in S. Marco at Florence.

Both were excellent craftsmen and consummate colourists, as is proved by the pictures executed by each unassisted. Albertinelli's 'Salutation' in the Uffizzi yields no point of grace and vigour to any of his more distinguished coadjutor's paintings.

The great contributions made by Fra Bartolommeo to the art of Italy were in the double region of composition and colouring. In his justly celebrated fresco of S. Maria Nuova at Florence—a 'Last Judgment' with a Christ enthroned amid a choir of Saints—he exhibited for the first time a thoroughly scientific scheme of grouping based on geometrical principles. Each part is perfectly balanced in itself, and yet is necessary to the structure of the whole. The complex framework may be subdivided into numerous sections no less harmoniously ordered than is the total scheme to which they are subordinated. Simple figures—the pyramid and the triangle, upright, inverted, and interwoven like the rhymes in a sonnet—form the basis of the composition. This system was adhered to by the Frate in all his subsequent works. To what extent it influenced the style of Raphael will be afterwards discussed. As a colourist, Fra Bartolommeo was equal to the best of his contemporaries, and superior to any of his rivals in the school of Florence. Few painters of any age have combined harmony of tone so perfectly with brilliance and richness. It is a real joy to contemplate the pure and splendid folds of the white drapery he loved to place in the foreground of his altar-pieces. Solidity and sincerity distinguish his work in every detail, while his feeling is remarkable for elevation and sobriety. All that he lacks is the boldness of imagination, the depth of passion, and the power of thought, that are indispensable to genius of the highest order. Gifted with a sympathetic and a pliant, rather than a creative and self-sustained nature, he was sensitive to every influence. Therefore we find him learning much in his youth from Lionardo, deriving a fresh impulse from Raphael, and endeavouring in his later life, after a visit to Rome in 1514, to 'heighten his style,' as the phrase went, by emulating Michael Angelo. The attempt to tread the path of Buonarroti was a failure. What Fra Bartolommeo sought to gain in majesty, he lost in charm. His was essentially a pure and gracious manner, upon which sublimity could not be grafted. The gentle soul, who dropped his weapon when the convent of S. Marco was besieged by the Compagnacci,<sup>33</sup> and who vowed, if heaven preserved him in the tumult, to become a monk, had none of Michael Angelo's *terribilità*. Without possessing some share of that spirit, it was vain to aggrandise the forms and mass the raiment of his prophets in imitation of the Sistine.

Nature made Fra Bartolommeo the painter of adoration.<sup>34</sup> His masterpiece at Lucca—the 'Madonna della Misericordia'—is a poem of glad worship, a hymn of prayerful praise. Our Lady stands elate, between

<sup>33</sup> May 23, 1498.

<sup>34</sup> In addition to the pictures mentioned above, I may call attention to the adoring figure of S. Catherine of Siena, in three large paintings—now severally in the Pitti, at Lucca, and in the Louvre.

earth and heaven, appealing to her Son for mercy. At her footstool are her suppliants, the men and women and little children of the city she has saved. The peril is past. Salvation has been won; and the song of thanksgiving ascends from all those massed and mingled forms in unison. Not less truly is the great unfinished picture of 'Madonna surrounded by the Patron Saints of Florence' a poem of adoration.<sup>35</sup> This painting was ordered by the Gonfalonier Piero Soderini, the man who dedicated Florence to Christ as King. He intended it to take its place in the hall of the Consiglio Grande, where Michael Angelo and Lionardo gained their earliest laurels. Before it could be finished, the Republic perished.<sup>36</sup> 'That,' says Rio, 'is the reason why he left but an imperfect work—for those at least who are only struck by what is wanting in it. Others will at first regard it with the interest attaching to unfinished poems, interrupted by the jailer's call or by the stern voice of the executioner. Then they will study it in all its details, in order to appreciate its beauties; and that appreciation will be the more perfect in proportion as a man is the more fully penetrated with its dominant idea, and with the attendant circumstances that bring this home to him. It is not against an abstract enemy that the intercession of the celestial powers is here invoked: it is not by a caprice of the painter or his patron that, in the group of central figures, S. Anne attracts attention before the Holy Virgin, not only by reason of her pre-eminence, but also through the intensity of her heavenward prayer, and again through her beauty, which far surpasses that of nearly all "Madonnas" painted by Fra Bartolommeo.'<sup>37</sup> But artist and patron had indeed good reason, in this crisis of the Commonwealth, to select as the most eminent advocate for Florence at the bar of Heaven that saint, on whose day, July 26, 1343, had been celebrated the emancipation of the city from its servitude to Walter of Brienne.

The great event of Fra Bartolommeo's life was the impression produced on him by Savonarola.<sup>38</sup> Having listened to the Dominican's terrific denunciations of worldliness and immorality, he carried his life studies to the pyre of vanities, resolved to assume the cowl, and renounced his art. Between 1499, when he was engaged in painting the 'Last Judgment' of S. Maria Nuova, and 1506, he is supposed never to have touched the pencil. When he resumed it Savonarola had been burned for heresy, and Fra Bartolommeo was a brother in his convent of S. Marco. Savonarola has sometimes been described as an iconoclast, obstinately hostile to the fine arts. This is by no means a true account of the crusade he carried on against the pagan sensuality of his contemporaries. He desired that art should remain the submissive handmaid of the Church and the willing servant of pure morality. While

<sup>35</sup> In the Uffizzi. As a composition, it is the Frate's masterpiece.

<sup>36</sup> See *Age of the Despots*, p. 318, for this consequence of the sack of Prato.

<sup>37</sup> *L'Art Chrétien*, vol. ii. p. 515.

<sup>38</sup> Two of our best portraits of Savonarola, the earlier inscribed 'Hieronymi Ferrariensis a Deo Missi Prophetæ Effigies,' the later treated to represent S. Peter Martyr are from the hand of Fra Bartolommeo. See Crowe and Cavalcaselle, vol. iii. p. 433.

he denounced the heathenism of the style in vogue at Florence, and forbade the study of the nude, he strove to encourage religious painting, and established a school for its exercise in the cloister of S. Marco. It was in this monastic *bottega* that Fra Bartolommeo, in concert with his friend Albertinelli, worked for the benefit of the convent after the year 1506. The reforms Savonarola attempted in the fine arts as in manners, by running counter to the tendencies of the Renaissance at a moment when society was too corrupt to be regenerated, and the passion for antiquity was too powerful to be restrained, proved of necessity ineffective. It may further be said that the limitations he imposed would have been fatal to the free development of art if they had been observed.

Several painters, besides Fra Baccio, submitted to Savonarola's influence. Among these the most distinguished were the pure and gentle Lorenzo di Credi and Sandro Botticelli, who, after the great preacher's death, is said to have abandoned painting. Neither Lorenzo di Credi nor Fra Baccio possessed a portion of the prophet's fiery spirit. Had that but found expression in their cloistral pictures, one of the most peculiar and characteristic flowers of art the world has ever known, would then have bloomed in Florence. The mantle of Savonarola, however, if it fell upon any painter, fell on Michael Angelo, and we must seek an echo of the friar's thunders in the Sistine Chapel. Fra Bartolommeo was too tender and too timid. The sublimities of tragic passion lay beyond his scope. Though I have ventured to call him the painter of adoration, he did not feel even this movement of the soul with the intensity of Fra Angelico. In the person of S. Dominic kneeling beneath the cross Fra Angelico painted worship as an ecstasy, wherein the soul goes forth with love and pain and yearning beyond any power of words or tears or music to express what it would utter. To these heights of the ascetic ideal Fra Bartolommeo never soared. His sobriety bordered upon the prosaic.

We have now reached the great age of the Italian Renaissance, the age in which, not counting for the moment Venice, four archangelic natures gathered up all that had been hitherto achieved in art since the days of Pisano and Giotto, adding such celestial illumination from the sunlight of their inborn genius that in them the world for ever sees what art can do. Lionardo da Vinci was born in Valdarno in 1452, and died in France in 1519. Michael Angelo Buonarroti was born at Caprese, in the Casentino, in 1475, and died at Rome in 1564, having outlived the lives of his great peers by nearly half a century. Raphael Santi was born at Urbino in 1483, and died in Rome in 1520. Antonio Allegri was born at Correggio in 1494, and died there in 1534. To these four men, each in his own degree and according to his own peculiar quality of mind, the fulness of the Renaissance, in its power and freedom, was revealed. They entered the inner shrine, where dwelt the spirit of their age, and bore to the world without the message each of them had heard. In their work posterity still may read the meaning of that epoch, dif-



ferently rendered according to the difference of gifts in each consummate artist, but comprehended in its unity by study of the four together. Lionardo is the wizard or diviner; to him the Renaissance offers her mystery and lends her magic. Raphael is the Phœbean singer; to him the Renaissance reveals her joy and dowers him with her gift of melody. Correggio is the Ariel or Faun; he has surprised laughter upon the face of the universe, and he paints this laughter in ever-varying movement. Michael Angelo is the prophet and Sibylline seer; to him the Renaissance discloses the travail of her spirit; him she endues with power; he wrests her secret, voyaging, like an ideal Columbus, the vast abyss of thought alone. In order that this revelation of the Renaissance in painting should be complete, it is necessary to add a fifth power to these four—that of the Venetian masters, who are the poets of carnal beauty, the rhetoricians of mundane pomp, the impassioned interpreters of all things great and splendid in the pageant of the outer world. As Venice herself, by type of constitution and historical development, remained sequestered from the rest of Italy, so her painters demand separate treatment.<sup>39</sup> It is enough, therefore, for the present to remember that without the note they utter the chord of the Renaissance lacks its harmony.

Lionardo, the natural son of Messer Pietro, notary of Florence and landed proprietor at Vinci, was so beautiful of person that no one, says Vasari, has sufficiently extolled his charm; so strong of limb that he could bend an iron ring or horse-shoe between his fingers; so eloquent of speech that those who listened to his words were fain to answer 'Yes' or 'No' as he thought fit. This child of grace and persuasion was a wonderful musician. The Duke of Milan sent for him to play upon his lute and improvise Italian canzoni. The lute he carried was of silver, fashioned like a horse's head, and tuned according to acoustic laws discovered by himself. Of the songs he sang to its accompaniment none have been preserved. Only one sonnet remains to show of what sort was the poetry of Lionardo, prized so highly by the men of his own generation. This, too, is less remarkable for poetic beauty than for sober philosophy expressed with singular brevity of phrase.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>39</sup> See below, chapter vii.

<sup>40</sup> This sonnet I have translated into English with such closeness to the original words as I found possible:—

He who can do not what he wills, should try  
 To will what he can do; for since 'tis vain  
 To will what can't be compassed, to abstain  
 From idle wishing is philosophy.  
 Lo, all our happiness and grief imply  
 Knowledge or not of will's ability:  
 They therefore can, who will what ought to be.  
 Nor wrest true reason from her seat awry.  
 Nor what a man can, should he always will:  
 Oft seemeth sweet what after is not so;  
 And what I wished, when had, hath cost a tear.  
 Then, reader of these lines, if thou wouldst still  
 Be helpful to thyself, to others dear,  
 Will to can alway what thou ought to do.

This story of Da Vinci's lute might be chosen as a parable of his achievement. Art and science were never separated in his work; and both were not unfrequently subservient to some fanciful caprice, some bizarre freak of originality. Curiosity and love of the uncommon ruled his nature. By intuition and by persistent interrogation of nature he penetrated many secrets of science; but he was contented with the acquisition of knowledge. Once found, he had but little care to distribute the results of his investigations; at most he sought to use them for purposes of practical utility.<sup>41</sup> Even in childhood he is said to have perplexed his teachers by propounding arithmetical problems. In his maturity he carried anatomy further than Della Torre; he invented machinery for water-mills and aqueducts; he devised engines of war, discovered the secret of conical rifle-bullets, adapted paddle-wheels to boats, projected new systems of siege artillery, investigated the principles of optics, designed buildings, made plans for piercing mountains, raising churches, connecting rivers, draining marshes, clearing harbours.<sup>42</sup> There was no branch of study whereby nature through the effort of the inquisitive intellect might be subordinated to the use of man, of which he was not master. Nor, richly gifted as was Lionardo, did he trust his natural facility. His patience was no less marvellous than the quickness of his insight. He lived to illustrate the definition of genius as the capacity for taking infinite pains.

While he was a boy, says Vasari, Lionardo modelled in terra-cotta certain heads of women smiling. This was in the workshop of Verocchio, who had already fixed a smile on David's face in bronze. When an old man, he left 'Mona Lisa' on the easel not quite finished, the portrait of a subtle, shadowy, uncertain smile. This smile, this enigmatic revelation of a movement in the soul, this seductive ripple on the surface of the human personality, was to Lionardo a symbol of the secret of the world, an image of the universal mystery. It haunted him all through his life, and innumerable were the attempts he made to render by external form the magic of this fugitive and evanescent charm.

Through long days he would follow up and down the streets of Florence or of Milan beautiful unknown faces, learning them by heart, interpreting their changes of expression, reading the thoughts through

<sup>41</sup> See the letter addressed by Lionardo to Lodovico Sforza enumerating his claims as a mechanician, military and civil engineer, architect, &c. It need scarcely be mentioned that he served Cesare Borgia and the Florentine Republic as an engineer, and that much of his time at Milan was spent in hydraulic works upon the Adda. It should be added here that Lionardo committed the results of his discoveries to writing; but he published very little, and that by no means the most precious portion of his thoughts. He founded at Milan an Academy of Arts and Sciences, if this name may be given to a reunion of artists, scholars, and men of the world, to whom it is probable that he communicated his researches in anatomy. The *Treatise on Painting*, which bears his name, is a compilation from notes and MSS. first printed in 1651.

<sup>42</sup> The folio volume of sketches in the Ambrosian Library at Milan contains designs for all these works. The collection in the Royal Library at Windsor is no less rich. Among Lionardo's scientific drawings in the latter place may be mentioned a series of maps illustrating the river system of Central Italy, with plans for improved drainage.

the features. These he afterwards committed to paper. We possess many such sketches—a series of ideal portraits, containing each an unsolved riddle that the master read; a procession of shadows, cast by reality, that, entering the camera lucida of the artist's brain, gained new and spiritual quality.<sup>43</sup> In some of them his fancy seems to be imprisoned in the labyrinths of hair; in others the eyes deep with feeling or hard with gemlike brilliancy have caught it, or the lips that tell and hide so much, or the nostrils quivering with momentary emotion. Beauty, inexpressive of inner meaning, must, we conceive, have had but slight attraction for him. We do not find that he drew 'a fair naked body' for the sake of its carnal charm; his hasty studies of the nude are often faulty, mere memoranda of attitude and gesture. The human form was interesting to him either scientifically or else as an index to the soul. Yet he felt the influence of personal loveliness. His favourite pupil Salaino was a youth 'of singular grace, with curled and waving hair, a feature of personal beauty by which Lionardo was always greatly pleased.' Hair, the most mysterious of human things, the most manifold in form and hue, snakelike in its subtlety for the entanglement of souls, had naturally supreme attractiveness for the magician of the arts.

With like energy Lionardo bent himself to divine the import of ugliness. Whole pages of his sketch-book are filled with squalid heads of shrivelled crones and ghastly old men—with idiots, goitred cretins, criminals, and clowns. It was not that he loved the horrible for its own sake; but he was determined to seize character, to command the gamut of human physiognomy from ideal beauty down to forms bestialised by vice and disease. The story related by Giraldis concerning the head of Judas in the 'Cenacolo' at Milan, sufficiently illustrates the method of Lionardo in creating types and the utility of such caricatures as his notebooks contain.<sup>44</sup>

It is told that he brought into his room one day a collection of reptiles—lizards, newts, toads, vipers, efts—all creatures that are loathsome to the common eye. These, by the magic of imagination, he combined into a shape so terrible that those who saw it shuddered. Medusa's snake-enwoven head exhaling poisonous vapour from the livid lips; Leda, swanlike beside her swan lover; Chimæra, in whom many natures mingled and made one; the conflict of a dragon and a lion; S. John conceived not as a prophet but as a vine-crowned Faun, the harbinger of joy:—over pictorial motives of this kind, attractive by reason of their complexity or mystery, he loved to brood; and to this fascination

<sup>43</sup> Shelley says of the poet:—

He will watch from dawn to gloom  
The lake-reflected sun illumine  
The yellow bees in the ivy bloom;  
Nor heed nor see what things they be,  
But from these create he can  
Forms more real than living man,  
Nurslings of immortality.

<sup>44</sup> See De Stendhal, *Histoire de la Peinture en Italie*, p. 143, for this story.

of a sphinx-like charm we owe some of his most exquisite drawings. Lionardo more than any other artist who has ever lived (except perhaps his great predecessor Leo Battista Alberti) felt the primal sympathies that bind men to the earth, their mother, and to living things, their brethren.<sup>45</sup> Therefore the borderland between humanity and nature allured him with a spell half æsthetic and half scientific. In the dawn of Hellas this sympathetic apprehension of the world around him would have made him a supreme mythopoet. In the dawn of the modern world curiosity claimed the lion's share of his genius: nor can it be denied that his art suffered by this division of interests. The time was not yet come for accurate physiological investigation, or for the true birth of the scientific spirit; and in any age it would have been difficult for one man to establish on a sound basis discoveries made in so many realms as those explored by Lionardo. We cannot, therefore, but regret that he was not more exclusively a painter. If, however, he had confined his activity to the production of works equal to the 'Cenacolo,' we should have missed the most complete embodiment in one personality of the twofold impulses of the Renaissance and of its boundless passion for discovery.

Lionardo's turn for physical science led him to study the technicalities of art with fervent industry. Whatever his predecessors had acquired in the knowledge of materials, the chemistry of colours, the mathematics of composition, the laws of perspective, and the illusions of *chiaroscuro*, he developed to the utmost. To find a darker darkness and a brighter brightness than had yet been shown upon the painter's canvas; to solve problems of fore-shortening; to deceive the eye by finely graduated tones and subtle touches; to submit the freest play of form to simple figures of geometry in grouping, were among the objects he most earnestly pursued. At the same time his deep feeling for all things that have life, gave him new power in the delineation of external nature. The branching of flower-stems, the outlines of fig-leaves, the attitudes of beasts and birds in motion, the arching of the fan-palm, were rendered by him with the same consummate skill as the dimple on a cheek or the fine curves of a young man's lips.<sup>46</sup> Wherever he perceived a difficulty, he approached and conquered it. Love, which is the soul of art—Love, the bondslave of Beauty and the son of Poverty by Craft—led him to these triumphs. He used to buy caged birds in the market-place that he might let them loose. He was attached to horses,

<sup>45</sup> In the *Treatise on Painting*, da Vinci argues strongly against isolating man. He regarded the human being as in truth a microcosm to be only understood in relation to the world around him, expressing, as a painter, the same thought as Pico. (See *Revival of Learning*, p. 352.) Therefore he urges the claims of landscape on the attention of artists.

<sup>46</sup> I might refer in detail to four studies of bramble branches, leaves, and flowers and fruit, in the royal collection at Windsor, most wonderful for patient accuracy and delicate execution: also to drawings of oak leaves, wild guelder-rose, broom, columbine, asphodel, bull-rush, and wood-spurge in the same collection. These careful studies are as valuable for the botanist as for the artist. To render the specific character of each plant with greater precision would be impossible.

and kept a sumptuous stable; and these he would draw in eccentric attitudes, studying their anatomy in detail for his statue of Francesco Sforza.<sup>47</sup> In the 'Battle of the Standard,' known to us only by a sketch of Rubens,<sup>48</sup> he gave passions to the horse—not human passion, nor yet merely equine—but such as horses might feel when placed upon a par with men. In like manner the warriors are fiery with bestial impulses—leonine fury, wolfish ferocity, fox-like cunning. Their very armour takes the shape of monstrous reptiles. To such an extent did the interchange of human and animal properties haunt Lionardo's fancy.

From what has been already said we shall be better able to understand Lionardo's love of the bizarre and grotesque. One day a vine-dresser brought him a very curious lizard. The master fitted it with wings injected with quicksilver to give them motion as the creature crawled. Eyes, horns, and a beard, a marvellous dragon's mask, were placed upon its head. This strange beast lived in a cage, where Lionardo tamed it; but no one, says Vasari, dared so much as to look at it.<sup>49</sup> On quaint puzzles and perplexing schemes he mused a good part of his life away. At one time he was for making wings to fly with; at another he invented ropes that should uncoil, strand by strand; again, he devised a system of flat corks, by means of which to walk on water.<sup>50</sup> One day, after having scraped the intestines of a sheep so thin that he could hold them in the hollow of his hand, he filled them with wind from a bellows, and blew and blew until the room was choked, and his visitors had to run into corners. Lionardo told them that this was a proper symbol of genius.

Such stories form what may be called the legend of Lionardo's life; and some of them seem simple, others almost childish.<sup>51</sup> They illustrate what is meant when we call him the wizard of the Renaissance. Art, nature, life, the mysteries of existence, the infinite capacity of human thought, the riddle of the world, all that the Greeks called Pan, so swayed and allured him that, while he dreamed and wrought and never ceased from toil, he seemed to have achieved but little. The fancies of his brain were, perhaps, too subtle and too fragile to be made apparent to the eyes of men. He was wont, after years of labour, to leave his

<sup>47</sup> See the series of anatomical studies of the horse in the Royal Collection.

<sup>48</sup> Engraved by Edelinck. The drawing has obvious Lionardesque qualities; but how far it may be from the character of the original we can guess by Rubens' transcript from Mantegna. (See above, p. 712.) De Stendhal says wittily of this work, 'C'est Virgile traduit par Madame de Staël,' op. cit. p. 162.

<sup>49</sup> In the Royal Collection at Windsor there are anatomical drawings for the construction of an imaginary quadruped with gigantic claws. The bony, muscular, and venous structure of its legs and feet is accurately indicated.

<sup>50</sup> See the drawings engraved and published by Gerli in his *Disegni di Lionardo da Vinci*, Milan, 1784.

<sup>51</sup> Vasari is the chief source of these legends. Giralaldi, Lomazzo, the Milanese historian of painting, and Bandello, the novelist, supply further details. It appears from all accounts that Lionardo impressed his contemporaries as a singular and most commanding personality. There is a touch of reverence in even the strangest stories, which is wanting in the legend of Piero di Cosimo.

work still incomplete, feeling that he could not perfect it as he desired: yet even his most fragmentary sketches have a finish beyond the scope of lesser men. 'Extraordinary power,' says Vasari, 'was in his case conjoined with remarkable facility, a mind of regal boldness and magnanimous daring.' Yet he was constantly accused of indolence and inability to execute.<sup>52</sup> Often and often he made vast preparations and accomplished nothing. It is well known how the Prior of S. Maria delle Grazie complained that Lionardo stood for days looking at his fresco, and for weeks never came near it; how the monks of the Annunziata at Florence were cheated out of their painting, for which elaborate designs had yet been made; how Leo X., seeing him mix oils with varnish to make a new medium, exclaimed, 'Alas! this man will do nothing; he thinks of the end before he makes a beginning.' A good answer to account for the delay was always ready on the painter's lips, as that the man of genius works most when his hands are idlest; Judas, sought in vain through all the thieves' resorts in Milan, is not found; I cannot hope to see the face of Christ except in Paradise. Again, when an equestrian statue of Francesco Sforza had been modelled in all its parts, another model was begun because Da Vinci would fain show the warrior triumphing over a fallen foe.<sup>53</sup> The first motive seemed to him tame; the second was unrealisable in bronze. 'I can do anything possible to man,' he wrote to Lodovico Sforza, 'and as well as any living artist either in sculpture or painting.' But he would do nothing as taskwork, and his creative brain loved better to invent than to execute.<sup>54</sup> 'Of a truth,' continues his biographer, 'there is good reason to believe that the very greatness of his most exalted mind, aiming at more than could be effected, was itself an impediment; perpetually seeking to add excellence to excellence and perfection to perfection. This was without doubt the true hindrance, so that, as our Petrarch has it, the work was retarded by desire.' At the close of that cynical and positive century, the spirit whereof was so well expressed by Cosimo de' Medici,<sup>55</sup> Lionardo set before himself aims infinite instead of finite. His designs of wings to fly with symbolise his whole endeavour. He believed in solving the insoluble; and nature had so richly dowered him in the very dawntime

<sup>52</sup> Even Michael Angelo, meeting him in Florence, flung in his teeth that 'he had made the model of a horse to cast in bronze, and could not cast it, and through shame left it as it was unfinished.' See *Arch. St. It.*, serie terza, xvi. 226.

<sup>53</sup> In the Royal Collection at Windsor there is a whole series of studies for these two statues, together with drawings for the mould in which Lionardo intended to cast them. The second of the two is sketched with great variety of motive. The horse is rearing; the fallen enemy is vainly striving to defend himself; the victor in one drawing is reining in his steed, in another is waving a truncheon, in a third is brandishing his sword, in a fourth is holding the sword in act to thrust. The designs for the pedestals, sometimes treated as a tomb and sometimes as a fountain, are equally varied.

<sup>54</sup> 'Concevoir,' said Balzac, 'c'est jouer, c'est fumer des cigarettes enchantées; mais sans l'exécution tout s'en va en rêve et en fumée.' Quoted by Sainte-Beuve, *Causeries du Lundi*, vol. ii. p. 353.

<sup>55</sup> See *Revival of Learning*, p. 410, 411.

of discovery, that he was almost justified in this delusion. Having caught the Proteus of the world, he tried to grasp him; but the god changed shape beneath his touch. Having surprised Silenus asleep, he begged from him a song; but the song Silenus sang was so marvellous in its variety, so subtle in its modulations, that Lionardo could do no more than recall scattered phrases. His Proteus was the spirit of the Renaissance. The Silenus from whom he forced the song was the double nature of man and of the world.

By ill chance it happened that Lionardo's greatest works soon perished. His cartoon at Florence disappeared. His model for Sforza's statue was used as a target by French bowmen. His 'Last Supper' remains a mere wreck in the Convent delle Grazie. Such as it is, blurred by ill-usage and neglect, more blurred by impious repainting, that fresco must be seen by those who wish to understand Da Vinci. It has well been called the compendium of all his studies and of all his writings; and, chronologically, it is the first masterpiece of the perfected Renaissance.<sup>56</sup> Other painters had represented the Last Supper as a solemn prologue to the Passion, or as the mystical inauguration of the greatest Christian sacrament.<sup>57</sup> But none had dared to break the calm of the event by a dramatic action. The school of Giotto, Fra Angelico, Ghirlandajo, Perugino, even Signorelli, remained within the sphere of symbolical suggestion; and their work gained in dignity what it lost in intensity. Lionardo combined both. He undertook to paint a moment, to delineate the effect of a single word upon twelve men seated at a table and to do this without sacrificing the tranquillity demanded by ideal art, and without impairing the divine majesty of Him from whose lips that word has fallen. The time has long gone by for detailed criticism or description of a painting known to everybody. It is enough to observe that the ideal representation of a dramatic moment, the life breathed into each part of the composition, the variety of the types chosen to express varieties of character, and the scientific distribution of the twelve Apostles in four groups of three around the central Christ, mark the appearance of a new spirit of power and freedom in the arts. What had hitherto been treated with religious timidity, with conventional stiffness, or with realistic want of grandeur, was now humanised and at the same time transported into a higher intellectual region; and though Lionardo discrowned the Apostles of their aureoles, he for the first time in the history of painting created a Christ not unworthy to be worshipped as the *præsens Deus*. We know not whether to admire most the perfection of the painter's art or his insight into spiritual things.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>56</sup> It was finished, according to Fra Paciolo, in 1498.

<sup>57</sup> Signorelli, with his usual originality, chose the moment when Christ broke bread and gave it to His disciples. In that rare picture at Cortona, we see not the betrayed chief but the founder of a new religion.

<sup>58</sup> The Cenacolo alone will not enable the student to understand Lionardo. He must give his attention to the master's sketch books, those studies in chalk, in tempera, on thin canvas and paper, prepared for the stylus or the pen, which Vasari calls the



If we are forced to feel that, with Da Vinci, accomplishment fell short of power and promise, the case is very different with Raphael. In him there was no perplexity, no division of interests. He was fascinated by no insoluble mystery and absorbed by no seductive problems. His faculty and his artistic purpose were exactly balanced, adequate, and mutually supporting. He saw by intuition what to do, and he did it without let or hindrance, exercising from his boyhood till his early death an unimpeded energy of pure productiveness. Like Mozart, to whom he bears in many respects a remarkable resemblance, Raphael was gifted with inexhaustible fertility and with unwearied industry. Like Mozart, again, he had a nature which converted everything to beauty. Thought, passion, emotion, became in his art living melody. We almost forget his strength in admiration of his grace; the travail of his intellect is hidden by the serenity of his style. There is nothing overmuch in any portion of his work, no sense of effort, no straining of a situation, not even that element of terror needful to the true sublime. It is as though the spirit of young Greece had lived in him again, purifying his taste to perfection and restraining him from the delineation of things stern or horrible.

Raphael found in this world nothing but its joy, and communicated to his ideal the beauty of untouched virginity. Brescia might be sacked with sword and flame. The Baglioni might hew themselves to pieces in Perugia. The plains of Ravenna might flow with blood. Urbino might change masters and obey the viperous Duke Valentino. Raphael, meanwhile, working through his short May-life of less than twenty years, received from nature and from man a message that was harmony unspoiled by one discordant note. His very person was a symbol of his genius. Lionardo was beautiful but stately, with firm lips and penetrating glance; he conquered by the magnetism of an incalculable personality. The loveliness of Raphael was fair and flexible, fascinating not by power or mystery, but by the winning charm of open-hearted sweetness. To this physical beauty, rather delicate than strong, he united spiritual graces of the most amiable nature. He was gentle, docile, modest, ready to oblige, free from jealousy, binding all men to him by his cheerful courtesies.<sup>59</sup> In morals he was pure. Indeed, judged by the lax standard of those times, he might be called almost immaculate. His intellectual capacity, in all that concerned the art of painting, was unbounded; but we cannot place him among the many-sided heroes

final triumphs of designing, and of which, in spite of the loss of many of his books, the surviving specimens are very numerous. Some are easily accessible in Gerli, Chamberlaine, and the autotype reproductions. It is possible that a sympathetic student may get closer to the all-embracing and all-daring genius of the magician through these drawings than if he had before him an elaborate work in fresco or in oils. They express the many-sided, mobile, curious, and subtle genius of the man in its entirety.

<sup>59</sup> 'Raffaello, che era la gentilezza stessa . . . . restavano vinti dalla cortesia e dall' arte sua, ma più dal genio della sua buona natura; la quale era sì piena di gentilezza e sì colma di carità, che egli si vedeva che fino agli animali l' onoravano, non che gli uomini.'—Vasari, vol. viii. pp. 6, 60.

of the Renaissance. What he attempted in sculpture, though elegant, is comparatively insignificant; and the same may be said about his buildings. As a painter he was capable of comprehending and expressing all things without excess or sense of labour. Of no other artist do we feel that he was so instinctively, unerringly right in what he thought and did.

Among his mental faculties the power of assimilation seems to have been developed to an extraordinary degree. He learned the rudiments of his art in the house of his father Santi at Urbino, where a Madonna is still shown—the portrait of his mother, with a child, perhaps the infant Raphael, upon her lap. Starting, soon after his father's death, as a pupil of Perugino, he speedily acquired that master's manner so perfectly that his earliest works are only to be distinguished from Perugino's by their greater delicacy, spontaneity, and inventiveness. Though he absorbed all that was excellent in the Peruginesque style, he avoided its affectations, and seemed to take departure for a higher flight from the most exquisite among his teacher's early paintings. Later on, while still a lad, he escaped from Umbrian conventionality by learning all that was valuable in the art of Masaccio and Fra Bartolommeo. To the latter master, himself educated by the influence of Lionardo, Raphael owed more, perhaps, than to any other of his teachers. The method of combining figures in masses, needful to the general composition, while they preserve a subordinate completeness of their own, had been applied with almost mathematical precision by the Frate in his fresco at S. Maria Nuova.<sup>60</sup> It reappears in all Raphael's work subsequent to his first visit to Florence<sup>61</sup> (1504-1506). So great, indeed, is the resemblance of treatment between the two painters that we know not well which owed the other most. Many groups of women and children in the Stanze, for example—especially in the 'Miracle of Bolsena' and the 'Heliodorus'—seem almost identical with Fra Bartolommeo's 'Madonna della Misericordia' at Lucca. Finally, when Raphael settled in Rome, he laid himself open to the influence of Michael Angelo, and drank in the classic spirit from the newly discovered antiques. Here at last it seemed as though his native genius might suffer from contact with the potent style of his great rival; and there are many students of art who feel that Raphael's later manner was a declension from the divine purity of his early pictures. There is, in fact, a something savouring of overbloom in the Farnesina frescoes, as though the painter's faculty had been strained beyond its natural force. Muscles are exaggerated to give the appearance of strength, and open mouths are multiplied to indicate astonishment and action. These faults may be found even in the Cartoons. Yet who shall say that Raphael's power was on the decline, or that his noble style was passing into mannerism,

<sup>60</sup> See above, p. 727.

<sup>61</sup> The 'Holy Family' at Munich, and the 'Madonna del Baldacchino' in the Pitti, might be mentioned as experiments on Raphael's part to perfect the Frate's scheme of composition.

after studying both the picture of the 'Transfiguration' and the careful drawings from the nude prepared for this last work?

So delicate was the assimilative tendency in Raphael, that what he learned from all his teachers, from Perugino, Fra Bartolommeo, Masaccio, Da Vinci, Michael Angelo, and the antique, was mingled with his own style without sacrifice of individuality. Inferior masters imitated him, and passed their pictures off upon posterity as Raphael's; but to mistake a genuine piece of his painting for the performance of another is almost impossible. Each successive step he made was but a liberation of his genius, a stride toward the full expression of the beautiful he saw and served. He was never an eclectic. The masterpieces of other artists taught him how to comprehend his own ideal.

Raphael is not merely a man, but a school. Just as in his genius he absorbed and comprehended many diverse styles, so are many worthy craftsmen included in his single name. Fresco-painters, masters of the easel, workmen in mosaic and marquetric, sculptors, builders, arras-weavers, engravers, decorators of ceilings and of floors, all laboured under his eye, receiving designs from his hand, and executing what was called thereafter by his name.<sup>62</sup> It was thus partly by his facility and energy, partly by the use he made of other men, that Raphael was able to achieve so much. In the Vatican he covered the walls and ceilings of the Stanze with historical and symbolical frescoes that embrace the whole of human knowledge. The cramping limits of ecclesiastical tradition are transcended. The synod of the antique sages finds a place beside the synod of the Fathers and the company of Saints. Parnassus and the allegory of the virtues front each other. The legend of Marsyas and the mythus of the Fall are companion pictures. A new catholicity, a new orthodoxy of the beautiful, appears. The Renaissance in all its breadth and liberality of judgment takes ideal form. Nor is there any sense of discord; for the genius of Raphael views both revelations, Christian and pagan, from a point of view of art above them. To his pure and unimpeded faculty the task of translating motives so diverse into mutually concordant shapes was easy. On the domed ceilings of the Loggie he painted sacred history in a series of exquisitely simple compositions, known as Raphael's Bible. The walls and pilasters were adorned with arabesques that anticipated the discovery of Pompeii, and surpassed the best of Roman frescoes in variety and freedom. With his own hands he coloured the incomparable 'Triumph of Galatea' in Agostino Chigi's villa on the Tiber, while his pupils traced the legend of Cupid and Psyche from his drawings on the roof of the great banquet hall. Remaining within the circuit of Rome, we may turn from the sibyls of S. Maria della Pace to the genii of the planets in S. Maria del Popolo, from the 'Violin-player' of the Sciarra palace to the 'Transfiguration' in the Vatican: wherever we go, we find the masterpieces of

<sup>62</sup> See Vasari, vol. viii. p. 60, for a description of the concord that reigned in this vast workshop. The genius and the gentle nature of Raphael penetrated the whole group of artists, and seemed to give them a single soul.

this youth, so various in conception, so equal in performance. And then, to think that the palaces and picture-galleries of Europe are crowded with his easel-pictures, that his original drawings display a boundless store of prodigal inventive creativeness, that the Cartoons, of which England is proud, are alone enough to found a mighty master's fame!

The vast mass of Raphael's works is by itself astounding. The accuracy of their design and the perfection of their execution are literally overwhelming to the imagination that attempts to realise the conditions of his short life. There is nothing, or but very little, of rhetoric in all this world of pictures. The brain has guided the hand throughout, and the result is sterling poetry. The knowledge, again, expressed in many of his frescoes is so thorough that we wonder whether in his body lived again the soul of some accomplished sage. How, for example, did he appropriate the history of philosophy, set forth so luminously in the 'School of Athens,' that each head, each gesture, is the epitome of some system? Fabio Calvi may, indeed, have supplied him with serviceable notes on Greek philosophy. But to Raphael alone belongs the triumph of having personified the dry elements of learning in appropriate living forms. The same is true of the 'Parnassus,' and, in a less degree, of the 'Disputa.' To the physiognomist these frescoes will always be invaluable. The 'Heliodorus,' the 'Miracle of Bolsena,' and the Cartoons, display a like faculty applied with more dramatic purpose. Passion and action take the place of representative ideas; but the capacity for translating into perfect human form what has first been intellectually apprehended by the artist, is the same.

If, after estimating the range of thought revealed in this portion of Raphael's work, we next consider the labour of the mind involved in the distribution of so many multitudes of beautiful and august human figures, in the modelling of their drapery, the study of their expression, and their grouping into balanced compositions, we may form some notion of the magnitude of Raphael's performance. It is, indeed, probable that all attempts at reflective analysis of this kind do injustice to the spontaneity of the painter's method. Yet, even supposing that the 'Miraculous Draught of Fishes' or the 'School of Athens' were seen by him as in a vision, this presumption will increase our wonder at the imagination which could hold so rich a store of details ready for immediate use. That Raphael paid the most minute attention to the details of his work, is shown by the studies made for these two subjects, and by the drawings for the 'Transfiguration.' A young man bent on putting forth his power the first time in a single picture that should prove his mastery, could not have laboured with more diligence than Raphael at the height of his fame and in full possession of his matured faculty.

When, furthermore, we take into account the variety of Raphael's work, we arrive at a new point of wonder. The drawing of 'Alexander's Marriage with Roxana,' the 'Temptation of Adam by Eve,' and the 'Massacre of the Innocents,' engraved by Marc Antonio, are unsurpassed

not only as compositions, but also as studies of the nude in chosen attitudes, powerfully felt and nobly executed. In these designs, which he never used for painting, the same high style is successively applied to a pageant, an idyll, and a drama.<sup>63</sup> The rapture of Greek art in its most youthful moment has never been recaptured by a modern painter with more force and fire of fancy than in the 'Galatea.' The tenderness of Christian feeling has found no more exalted expression than in the multitudes of the Madonnas, one more lovely than another, like roses on a tree in June, from the maidenly 'Madonna del Gran' Duca' to the celestial vision of the San Sisto, that sublimest lyric of the art of Catholicity.<sup>64</sup> It is only by hurrying through a list like this that we can appreciate the many-sided perfection of Raphael's accomplishment. How, lastly, was it possible that this young painter should have found the time to superintend the building of S. Peter's, and to form a plan for excavating Rome in its twelve ancient regions?<sup>65</sup>

When Lomazzo assigned emblems to the chief painters of the Renaissance, he gave to Michael Angelo the dragon of contemplation, and to Mantegna the serpent of sagacity. For Raphael, by a happier instinct, he reserved man, the microcosm, the symbol of powerful grace, incarnate intellect. This quaint fancy of the Milanese critic touches the truth. What distinguishes the whole work of Raphael, is its humanity in the double sense of the humane and human. Phœbus, as imagined by the Greeks, was not more radiant, more victorious by the marvel of his smile, more intolerant of things obscene or ugly. Like Apollo chasing the Eumenides from his Delphian shrine, Raphael will not suffer his eyes to fall on what is loathsome or horrific. Even sadness and sorrow, tragedy and death, take loveliness from him. And here it must be mentioned that he shunned stern and painful subjects. He painted no martyrdom, no 'Last Judgment,' and no 'Crucifixion,' if we except the little early picture belonging to Lord Dudley.<sup>66</sup> His men and women are either glorious with youth or dignified in hale old age. Touched by his innocent and earnest genius, mankind is once more gifted with the harmony of intellect and flesh and feeling, that belonged to Hellas. Instead of asceticism, Hellenic temperance is the virtue prized by Raphael. Over his niche in the Temple of Fame might be written: 'I have said ye are gods;'—for the children of men in his ideal

<sup>63</sup> The fresco of 'Alexander' in the Palazzo Borghese is by an imitator.

<sup>64</sup> The 'Madonna di San Sisto' was painted for a banner to be borne in processions. It is a subtle observation of Rio that the banner, an invention of the Umbrian school, corresponds in painting to the hymn in poetry.

<sup>65</sup> See *Revival of Learning*, p. 529, for Raphael's letter on this subject to Leo X.

<sup>66</sup> 'La Spasimo di Scilia' is the single Passion picture of Raphael's maturity. The predella of 'Christ carrying the Cross' at Leigh Court, and the 'Christ showing His Wounds' in the Tosi Gallery at Brescia, are both early works painted under Umbrian influence. The Borghese 'Entombment,' painted for Atalanta Baglioni, a pen-and-ink drawing of the 'Pietà' in the Louvre collection, Marc Antonio's engraving of the 'Massacre of the Innocents,' and an early picture of the 'Agony in the Garden,' are all the other painful subjects I can now remember.

world are divinized. The godlike spirit of man is all in all. Happy indeed was the art that by its limitations and selections could thus early express the good news of the Renaissance; while in the spheres of politics and ethics, science and religion, we are still far from having learned its lesson.

Correggio is the Faun or Ariel of Renaissance painting. Turning to him from Raphael, we are naturally first struck by the affinities and differences between them. Both drew from their study of the world the elements of joy which it contains; but the gladness of Correggio was more sensuous than that of Raphael; his intellectual faculties were less developed; his rapture was more tumultuous and Bacchantic. Like Raphael, Correggio died young; but his brief life was spent in comparative obscurity and solitude. Far from the society of scholars and artists, ignorant of courts, unpatronised by princes, he wrought for himself alone the miracle of brightness and of movement that delights us in his frescoes and his easel-pictures.

Like a poet hidden  
In the light of thought,  
Singing hymns unbidden,

was this lyrist of luxurious ecstasy. In his work there was nothing worldly; that divides him from the Venetians, whose sensuousness he shared: nothing scientific; that distinguishes him from Da Vinci, the magic of whose *chiaroscuro* he comprehended: nothing contemplative—that separates him from Michael Angelo, the audacity of whose design in dealing with forced attitudes he rivalled, without apparently having enjoyed the opportunity of studying his works. The cheerfulness of Raphael, the wizardry of Lionardo, and the boldness of Michael Angelo, met in him to form a new style, the originality of which is indisputable, and which takes us captive—not by intellectual power, but by the impulse of emotion. Of his artistic education we know nothing; and when we call him the Ariel of painting, this means that we are compelled to think of him as an elemental spirit, whose bidding the air and the light and the hues of the morning obey.

Correggio created a world of beautiful human beings, the whole condition of whose existence is an innocent and radiant wantonness.<sup>67</sup> Over the domain of tragedy he had no sway; nor could he deal with subjects demanding pregnancy of intellectual meaning. He paints the three Fates, for instance, like young and joyous Bacchantes; if we placed rose-garlands and thyrsi in their hands instead of the distaff and the thread of human destinies, they might figure upon the panels of a banquet; chamber in Pompeii. Nor, again, did he possess that severe and lofty art of composition which seeks the highest beauty of design in architectural harmony supreme above the melodies of gracefulness in detail.

<sup>67</sup> For a fuller working out of this analysis I must refer to my *Sketches in Italy*, article 'Parma.' Much that follows is a quotation from that essay.

He was essentially a lyrical as distinguished from an epical or dramatic poet. The unity of his work is derived from the effect of light and atmosphere, the inbreathed soul of tremulous and throbbing life, which bathes and liquefies the whole. It was enough for him to produce a gleeful symphony by the play of light and colour, by the animation of his figures, and by the intoxicating beauty of his forms. His angels are geni disimprisoned from the chalices of flowers, hours of an erotic Paradise, elemental sprites of nature wantoning in Eden in her prime. They belong to the generation of the fauns. Like fauns, they combine a certain wildness, a dithyrambic ecstasy, a delight in rapid motion as they revel amid clouds and flowers, with the permanent and all-pervading sweetness of the painter's style. Correggio's sensibility to light and colour—that quality which makes him unique among painters—was on a par with his feeling for form. Brightness and darkness are woven together on his figures like an impalpable veil, ærial and transparent, enhancing the palpitations of voluptuous movement which he loved. His colouring does not glow or burn; blithesome and delicate, it seems exactly such a beauty-bloom as sense requires for its satiety. That cord of jocund colour which may fitly be combined with the smiles of daylight, the clear blues found in laughing eyes, the pinks that tinge the cheeks of early youth, and the warm yet silvery tones of healthy flesh, mingle, as in a pearl-shell, on his pictures. Within his own magic circle Correggio reigns supreme; no other artist having blent the witcheries of colouring, *chiaroscuro*, and wanton loveliness of form, into a harmony so perfect in its sensuous charm. To feel his influence, and at the same moment to be the subject of strong passion, or intense desire, or heroic resolve, or profound contemplation, or pensive melancholy, is impossible. The Northern traveller, standing beneath his master-works in Parma, may hear from each of those radiant and laughing faces what the young Italian said to Goethe: *Perché pensae pensando s' invecchia*.

Michael Angelo is the prophet or seer of the Renaissance. It would be impossible to imagine a stronger contrast than that which distinguishes his art from Correggio's, or lives more different in all their details, than those which he and Raphael or Lionardo lived respectively. During the eighty-nine years of his earthly pilgrimage he saw Italy enslaved and Florence extinguished; it was his exceeding bitter fate to watch the rapid decay of the arts and to witness the triumph of sacerdotal despotism over liberal thought. To none of these things was he indifferent; and the sorrow they wrought in his soul, found expression in his painting.<sup>68</sup> Michael Angelo was not framed by nature to fascinate

<sup>68</sup> Much of the controversy about Michael Angelo, which is continually being waged between his admirers and his detractors, might be set at rest if it were acknowledged that there are two distinct ways of judging works of art. We may regard them simply as appealing to our sense of beauty, and affording harmonious intellectual pleasure. Or we may regard them as expressing the thought and spirit of their age, and as utterances made by men whose hearts burned within them. Critics trained in the study of good Greek sculpture, or inclined by temperament to admire the earlier products of Italian painting, are apt to pursue the former path exclusively. They



like Lionardo or to charm like Raphael. His manners were severe and simple. When he spoke, his words were brief and pungent. When he wrote, whether in poetry or prose, he used the fewest phrases to express the most condensed meaning. When asked why he had not married, he replied that the wife he had—his art—cost him already too much trouble. He entertained few friends, and shunned society. Brooding over the sermons of Savonarola, the text of the Bible, the discourses of Plato, and the poems of Dante, he made his spirit strong in solitude by the companionship with everlasting thoughts. Therefore, when he was called to paint the Sistine Chapel, he uttered through painting the weightiest prophecy the world has ever seen expressed in plastic form. His theme is nothing less than the burden of the prophets and the Sibyls who preached the coming of a light upon the world, and the condemnation of the world which had rejected it, by an inexorable judge. Michelet says, not without truth, that the spirit of Savonarola lives again in these frescoes. The procession of the four-and-twenty elders, arraigned before the people of Brescia to accuse Italy of sin—the voice that cried to Florence, 'Behold the sword of the Lord, and that swiftly! Behold I, even I, do bring a deluge on the earth!' are both seen and heard here very plainly. But there is more than Savonarola in this prophecy of Michael Angelo's. It contains the stern spirit of Dante, aflame with patriotism, passionate for justice. It embodies the philosophy of Plato. The creative God, who divides light from darkness, who draws Adam from the clay and calls forth new-born Eve in awful beauty, is the Demiurgus of the Greek. Again, it carries the indignation of Isaiah, the wild denunciations of Ezekiel, the monotonous refrain of Jeremiah—'Ah, Lord, Lord!' The classic Sibyls intone their mystic hymns; the Delphic on her tripod of inspiration, the Erythræan bending over her scrolls, the withered witch of Cumæ, the parched prophetess of Libya—all seem to cry, 'Repent, repent! for the kingdom of the spirit is at hand! Repent and awake, for the judgment of the world approaches!' And above these voices we hear a most tremendous wail: 'The nations have come to the birth; but there is not strength to bring forth.' That is the utterance of the Renaissance, as it had appeared in Italy. She who was first among the nations was now last;

demand serenity and simplicity. Perturbation and violence they denounce as blemishes. It does not occur to them that, though the phenomenon is certainly rare, it does occasionally happen that a man arises whose art is for him the language of his soul, and who lives in sympathetic relation to the sternest interests of his age. If such an artist be born when tranquil thought and serene emotions are impossible for one who feels the meaning of his times with depth, he must either paint and carve lies, or he must abandon the serenity that was both natural and easy to the Greek and the earlier Italian. Michael Angelo was one of these select artistic natures. He used his chisel and his pencil to express, not merely beautiful artistic motives, but what he felt and thought about the world in which he had to live: and this world was full of the ruin of republics, the corruption and humiliation of society, the subjection of Italy to strangers. In Michael Angelo the student of both art and history finds an inestimably precious and rare point of contact between the inner spirit of an age, and its external expression in sculpture and painting.

bound and bleeding, she lay prostrate at the temple-gate she had unlocked. To Michael Angelo was given for his portion—not the alluring mysteries of the new age, not the joy of the nascent world, not the petulant and pulsing rapture of youth: these had been divided between Lionardo, Raphael, and Correggio—but the bitter burden of the sense that the awakening to life is in itself a pain, that the revelation of the liberated soul is itself judgment, that a light is shining, and that the world will not comprehend it. Pregnant as are the paintings of Michael Angelo with religious import, they are no longer Catholic in the sense in which the frescoes of the Lorenzetti and Orcagna and Giotto are Catholic. He went beyond the ecclesiastical standing ground and reached one where philosophy includes the Christian faith. Thus the true spirit of the Renaissance was embodied in his work of art.

Among the multitudes of figures covering the wall above the altar in the Sistine Chapel there is one that might well stand for a symbol of the Renaissance. It is a woman of gigantic stature in the act of toiling upwards from the tomb. Grave clothes impede the motion of her body: they shroud her eyes and gather round her chest. Part only of her face and throat is visible, where may be read a look of blank bewilderment and stupefaction, a struggle with death's slumber in obedience to some inner impulse. Yet she is rising slowly, half awake, and scarcely conscious, to await a doom still undetermined. Thus Michael Angelo interpreted the meaning of his age.

## CHAPTER VII

### VENETIAN PAINTING

*Painting bloomed late in Venice—Conditions offered by Venice to Art—Shelley and Pietro Aretino—Political circumstances of Venice—Comparison with Florence—The Ducal Palace—Art regarded as an adjunct to State Pageantry—Myth of Venezia—Heroic Deeds of Venice—Tintoretto's Paradise and Guardi's Picture of a Ball—Early Venetian Masters of Murano—Gian Bellini—Carpaccio's little Angels—The Madonna of S. Zaccaria—Giorgione—Allegory, Idyll, Expression of Emotion—The Monk at the Clavichord—Titian, Tintoret, and Veronese—Tintoretto's attempt to dramatise Venetian Art—Veronese's Mundane Splendour—Titian's Sophoclean Harmony—Their Schools—Further Characteristics of Veronese—of Tintoretto—His Imaginative Energy—Predominant Poetry—Titian's Perfection of Balance—Assumption of Madonna—Spirit common to the Great Venetians.*

It was a fact of the greatest importance for the development of the fine arts in Italy that painting in Venice reached maturity later than in Florence. Owing to this circumstance one chief aspect of the Renaissance, its material magnificence and freedom, received consummate treatment at the hands of Titian, Tintoretto, and Veronese. To idealise the sensualities of the external universe, to achieve for colour what the Florentines had done for form, to invest the worldly grandeur of human life at one of its most gorgeous epochs with the dignity of the highest art, was what these great artists were called on to accomplish. Their task could not have been so worthily performed in the fifteenth century as in the sixteenth, if the development of the æsthetic sense had been more premature among the Venetians.

Venice was precisely fitted for the part her painters had to play. Free, isolated, wealthy, powerful; famous throughout Europe for the pomp of her state equipage, and for the immorality of her private manners; ruled by a prudent aristocracy, who spent vast wealth on public shows and on the maintenance of a more than imperial civic majesty: Venice, with her pavement of liquid chrysoprase, with her palaces of porphyry and marble, her frescoed façades, her quays and squares aglow with the costumes of the Levant, her lagoons afloat with the galleys of all nations, her churches floored with mosaics, her silvery domes and ceilings glittering with sculpture bathed in molten gold: Venice luxurious in the light and colour of a vaporous atmosphere, where sea-mists rose into the mounded summer clouds; arched over by the broad expanse of sky, bounded only by the horizon of waves and plain and distant mountain ranges, and reflected in all its many hues of sunrise and sunset upon the glassy surface of smooth waters: Venice asleep like a

miracle of opal or of pearl upon the bosom of an undulating lake:—here and here only on the face of the whole globe was the unique city wherein the pride of life might combine with the lustre of the physical universe to create and stimulate in the artist a sense of all that was most sumptuous in the pageant of the world of sense.

There is colour in flowers. Gardens of tulips are radiant, and mountain valleys touch the soul with the beauty of their pure and gemlike hues. Therefore the painters of Flanders and of Umbria, John van Eyck and Gentile da Fabriano, penetrated some of the secrets of the world of colour. But what are the purples and scarlets and blues of iris, anemone, or columbine, dispersed among deep meadow grasses or trained in quiet cloister garden-beds, when compared with that melodrama of flame and gold and rose and orange and azure, which the skies and lagoons of Venice yield almost daily to the eyes? The Venetians had no green fields and trees, no garden borders, no blossoming orchards, to teach them the tender suggestiveness, the quaint poetry of isolated or contrasted tints. Their meadows were the fruitless furrows of the Adriatic, hued like a peacock's neck; they called the pearl-shells of their Lido flowers, *for di mare*. Nothing distracted their attention from the glories of morning and of evening presented to them by their sea and sky. It was in consequence of this that the Venetians conceived colour heroically, not as a matter of missal-margins or of subordinate decoration, but as a motive worthy in itself of sublime treatment. In like manner, hedged in by no limitary hills, contracted by no city walls, stifled by no narrow streets, but open to the liberal airs of heaven and ocean, the Venetians understood space and imagined pictures almost boundless in their immensity. Light, colour, air, space: those are the elemental conditions of Venetian art; of those the painters weaved their ideal world for beautiful and proud humanity.

Shelley's description of a Venetian sunset strikes the keynote to Venetian painting:<sup>1</sup>—

As those who pause on some delightful way,  
Though bent on pleasant pilgrimage, we stood  
Looking upon the evening and the flood,  
Which lay between the city and the shore,  
Paved with the image of the sky: the hoar  
And airy Alps, towards the north appeared,  
Through mist, a heaven-sustaining bulwark, reared  
Between the east and west; and half the sky  
Was roofed with clouds of rich emblazonry,  
Dark purple at the zenith, which still grew  
Down the steep west into a wondrous hue  
Brighter than burning gold, even to the rent  
Where the swift sun yet paused in his descent

<sup>1</sup> From the beginning of *Julian and Maddalo*, which relates a ride taken by Shelley with Lord Byron, on the Lido, and their visit to the madhouse on its neighbouring island. The description, richly coloured and somewhat confused in detail, seems to me peculiarly true to Venetian scenery. With the exception of Tunis, I know of no such theatre for sunset-shows as Venice. Tunis has the same elements of broad lagoons and distant hills, but not the same vaporous atmosphere.

Among the many-folded hills—they were  
 Those famous Euganean hills, which bear,  
 As seen from Lido through the harbour piles,  
 The likeness of a clump of peaked isles—  
 And then, as if the earth and sea had been  
 Dissolved into one lake of fire, were seen  
 Those mountains towering, as from waves of flame,  
 Around the vaporous sun, from which there came  
 The inmost purple spirit of light, and made  
 Their very peaks transparent. 'Ere it fade,'  
 Said my companion, 'I will show you soon  
 A better station.' So, o'er the lagoon  
 We glided: and from that funeral bark  
 I leaned, and saw the city; and could mark  
 How from their many isles, in evening's gleam,  
 Its temples and its palaces did seem  
 Like fabrics of enchantment piled to heaven.

With this we may compare the following extract from a letter, addressed in May 1544 to Titian, by one of the most unprincipled of literary bandits who have ever disgraced humanity, but who nevertheless was solemnised to the spirit of true poetry by the grandiose aspect of nature as it appeared to him in Venice. That Pietro Aretino should have so deeply felt the charm of natural beauty in an age when even the greatest artists and poets sought inspiration in human life rather than the outer world, is a significant fact. It seems to illustrate the necessity whereby Venice became the cradle of the art of nature.<sup>2</sup> 'Having, dear Sir, and my best gossip, supped alone to the injury of my custom, or, to speak more truly, supped in the company of all the boredoms of a cursed quartan fever, which will not let me taste the flavour of any food, I rose from table sated with the same disgust with which I had sat down to it. In this mood I went and leaned my arms upon the sill outside my window, and throwing my chest and nearly all my body on the marble, abandoned myself to the contemplation of the spectacle presented by the innumerable boats, filled with foreigners as well as people of the city, which gave delight not merely to the gazers, but also to the Grand Canal itself, that perpetual delight of all who plough its waters. From this animated scene, all of a sudden, like one who from mere *ennui* knows not how to occupy his mind, I turned my eyes to heaven, which, from the moment when God made it, was never adorned with such painted loveliness of lights and shadows. The whole region of the air was what those who envy you, because they are unable to be you, would fain express. To begin with, the buildings of Venice, though of solid stone, seemed made of some ethereal substance. Then the sky was full of variety—here clear and ardent, there dulled and overclouded. What marvellous clouds there were! Masses of them in the centre of the scene hung above the house-roofs, while the immediate part was formed of a grey tint inclining to dark. I gazed astonished at

<sup>2</sup> *Lettere di Messer Pietro Aretino*, Parigi, MDCIX, lib. iii. p. 48. I have made a paraphrase rather than a translation of this rare and curious description.

the varied colours they displayed. The nearer masses burned with flames of sunset; the more remote blushed with a blaze of crimson less afire. Oh, how splendidly did Nature's pencil treat and dispose that airy landscape, keeping the sky apart from the palaces, just as Titian does! On one side the heavens showed a greenish-blue, on another a bluish-green, invented verily by the caprice of Nature, who is mistress of the greatest masters. With her lights and her darks, there she was harmonising, toning, and bringing out into relief, just as she wished. Seeing which, I who know that your pencil is the spirit of her inmost soul, cried aloud thrice or four times, "Oh, Titian! where are you now?"

In order to understand the destiny of Venice in art, it is not enough to concentrate attention on the peculiarities of her physical environment. Potent as these were in the creation of her style, the political and social conditions of the Republic require also to be taken into account. Among Italian cities Venice was unique. She alone was tranquil in her empire, unimpeded in her constitutional development, independent of Church interference, undisturbed by the cross purposes and intrigues of the Despots, inhabited by merchants who were princes, and by a free-born people who had never seen war at their gates. The serenity of undisturbed security, the luxury of wealth amassed abroad and liberally spent at home, gave a physiognomy of ease and proud self-confidence to all her edifices. The grim and anxious struggles of the Middle Ages left no mark on Venice. How different was this town from Florence, every inch of whose domain could tell of civic warfare, whose passionate aspirations after independence ended in the despotism of the bourgeois Medici, whose repeated revolutions had slavery for their climax, whose grey palaces bore on their fronts the stamp of mediæval vigilance, whose spirit was incarnated in Dante the exile, whose enslavement forced from Michael Angelo those groans of a chained Titan expressed in the marbles of S. Lorenzo! It is not an insignificant, though a slight, detail, that the predominant colour of Florence is brown, while the predominant colour of Venice is that of mother-of-pearl, concealing within its general whiteness every tint that can be placed upon the palette of a painter. The conditions of Florence stimulated mental energy and turned the forces of the soul inwards. Those of Venice inclined the individual to accept life as he found it. Instead of exciting him to think, they disposed him to enjoy, or to acquire by industry the means of manifold enjoyment. To represent in art the intellectual strivings of the Renaissance was the task of Florence and her sons; to create a monument of Renaissance magnificence was the task of Venice. Without Venice the modern world could not have produced that flower of sensuous and unreflective loveliness in painting, which is worthy to stand beside the highest product of the Greek genius in sculpture. For Athena from her Parthenon stretches the hand to Venezia enthroned in the ducal palace. The broad brows and earnest eyes of the Hellenic goddess are of one divine birth and lineage with the golden hair and superb carriage of the sea-queen.

It is in the heart of Venice, in the House of the Republic, that the

Venetian painters, considered as the interpreters of worldly splendour, fulfilled their function with the most complete success. Centuries contributed to make the Ducal Palace what it is. The massive colonnades and Gothic loggias of the external basement date from the thirteenth century; their sculpture belongs to the age when Niccola Pisano's genius was in the ascendant. The square fabric of the palace, so beautiful in the irregularity of its pointed windows, so singular in its mosaic diaper of pink and white, was designed at the same early period. The inner court and the façade that overhangs the lateral canal, display the handiwork of Sansovino. The halls of the palace—spacious chambers where the Senate assembled, where ambassadors approached the Doge, where the Savi deliberated, where the Council of Ten conducted their inquisition—are walled and roofed with pictures of inestimable value, encased in framework of carved oak, overlaid with burnished gold. Supreme art—the art of the imagination perfected with delicate and skilful care in detail—is made in these proud halls the minister of mundane pomp. In order that the gold brocade of the ducal robes, that the scarlet and crimson of the Venetian senator, might be duly harmonised by the richness of their surroundings, it was necessary that canvases measured by the square yard, and rendered priceless by the authentic handiwork of Titian, Tintoret, and Veronese, should glow upon the walls and ceilings. A more insolent display of public wealth—a more lavish outpouring of human genius in the service of State pageantry, cannot be imagined.

Sublime over all allegories and histories depicted in those multitudes of paintings, sits Venezia herself enthroned and crowned, the personification of haughtiness and power. Figured as a regal lady, with yellow hair tightly knotted round a small head poised upon her upright throat and ample shoulders, Venice takes her chair of sovereignty—as mistress of the ocean to whom Neptune and the Tritons offer pearls, as empress of the globe at whose footstool wait Justice with the sword and Peace with the olive branch, as a queen of heaven exalted to the clouds. They have made her a goddess, those great painters; they have produced a mythus, and personified in native loveliness that bride of the sea, their love, their lady. The beauty of Venetian women and the glory of Venetian empire find their meeting point in her, and live as the spirit of Athens lived in Pallas Promachos. On every side, above, around, wherever the eye falls in those vast rooms, are seen the deeds of Venice—painted histories of her triumphs over emperors and popes and infidels, or allegories of her greatness—scenes wherein the Doges perform acts of faith, with S. Mark for their protector, and with Venezia for their patroness. The saints in Paradise, massed together by Tintoretto and by Palma, mingle with mythologies of Greece and Rome, and episodes of pure idyllic painting.

Religion in these pictures was a matter of parade, an adjunct to the costly public life of the Republic. We need not, therefore, conclude that it was unreal. Such as it was, the religion of the Venetian masters



is indeed as genuine as that of Fra Angelico or Albert Dürer. But it was the faith, not of humble men or of mystics, not of profound thinkers or ecstatic visionaries, so much as of courtiers and statesmen, of senators and merchants, for whom religion was a function among other functions, not a thing apart, not a source of separate and supreme vitality. Even as Christians, the Venetians lived a life separate from the rest of Italy. Their Church claimed independence of the see of Rome, and the enthusiasm of S. Francis was but faintly felt in the lagoons. Siena in her hour of need dedicated herself to Madonna; Florence in the hour of her regeneration gave herself to Christ; Venice remained under the ensign of the leonine S. Mark. While the cities of Lombardy and Central Italy ran wild with revivalism and religious panics, the Venetians maintained their calm, and never suffered piety to exceed the limits of political prudence. There is, therefore, no mystical exaltation in the faith depicted by her artists. That Tintoretto could have painted the saints in glory—a countless multitude of congregated forms, a sea whereof the waves are souls—as a background for State ceremony, shows the positive and realistic attitude of mind from which the most imaginative of Venetian masters started, when he undertook the most exalted of religious themes. Paradise is a fact, we may fancy Tintoretto reasoned; and it is easier to fill a quarter of an acre of canvas with a picture of Paradise than with any other subject, because the figures can be arranged in concentric tiers round Christ and Madonna in glory.

There is a little sketch by Guardi representing a masked ball in the Council Chamber where the 'Paradise' of Tintoretto fills a wall. The men are in periwigs and long waistcoats; the ladies wear hoops, patches, fans, high heels, and powder. Bowing, promenading, intriguing, exchanging compliments or repartees, they move from point to point; while from the billowy surge of saints, Moses with the table of the law and the Magdalen with her adoring eyes of penitence look down upon them. Tintoretto could not but have foreseen that the world of living pettiness and passion would perpetually jostle with his world of painted sublimities and sanctities in that vast hall. Yet he did not on that account shrink from the task or fail in its accomplishment. Paradise existed: therefore it could be painted; and he was called upon to paint it here. If the fine gentlemen and ladies below felt out of harmony with the celestial host, so much the worse for them. In this practical spirit the Venetian masters approached religious art, and such was the sphere appointed for it in the pageantry of the Republic. When Paolo Veronese was examined by the Holy Office respecting some supposed irreverence in a sacred picture, his answers clearly proved that in planning it he had thought less of its spiritual significance than of its æsthetic effect.<sup>3</sup>

In the Ducal Palace the Venetian art of the Renaissance culminates; and here we might pause a moment to consider the difference between these paintings and the mediæval frescoes of the Palazzo Pubblico at

<sup>3</sup> See Yriarte, *Un Patricien de Venise*, p. 439.

Siena.<sup>4</sup> The Sienese painters consecrated all their abilities to the expression of thoughts, theories of political self-government in a free State, and devotional ideas. The citizen who read the lesson of the Sala della Pace was instructed in his duties to God and to the State. The Venetian painters, as we have seen, exalted Venice and set forth her acts of power. Their work is a glorification of the Republic; but no doctrine is inculcated, and no system of thought is conveyed to the mind through the eye. Daily pacing the saloons of the palace, Doge and noble were reminded of the greatness of the State they represented. They were not invited to reflect upon the duties of the governor and governed. Their imaginations were dilated and their pride roused by the spectacle of Venice seated like a goddess in her home. Of all the secular States of Italy the Republic of S. Mark's alone produced this mythical ideal of the body politic, self-sustained and independent of the citizens, compelling their allegiance, and sustaining them through generations with the life of its organic unity.<sup>5</sup> The artists had no reason to paint thoughts and theories. It was enough to set forth Venice and to illustrate her acts.

Long before Venetian painting reached a climax in the decorative triumphs of the Ducal Palace, the masters of the school had formed a style expressive of the spirit of the Renaissance, considered as the spirit of free enjoyment and living energy. To trace the history of Venetian painting is to follow through its several stages the growth of that mastery over colour and sensuous beauty which was perfected in the works of Titian and his contemporaries.<sup>6</sup> Under the Vivarini of Murano the Venetian school in its infancy began with a selection from the natural world of all that struck them as most brilliant. No other painters of their age in Italy employed such glowing colours, or showed a more marked predilection for the imitation of fruits, rich stuffs, architectural canopies, jewels, and landscape backgrounds. Their piety, unlike the mysticism of the Sienese and the deep thought of the Florentine masters, is somewhat superficial and conventional. The merit of their devotional pictures consists of simplicity, vivacity, and joyousness. Our Lady and her court of saints seem living and breathing upon earth. There is no atmosphere of tranced solemnity surrounding them, like that which gives peculiar meaning to similar works of the Van Eycks and Memling—artists, by the way, who in many important respects are more nearly allied than any others to the spirit of the first age of Venetian painting.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> See above, p. 683.

<sup>5</sup> See Vol. I., *Age of the Despots*, p. 118.

<sup>6</sup> I must refer my readers to Crowe and Cavalcaselle for an estimate of the influence exercised at Venice by Gentile de Fabriano, John Alamannus, and the school of Squarcione. Antonello da Messina brought his method of oil-painting into the city in 1470, and Gian Bellini learned something at Padua from Andrea Mantegna. The true point about Venice, however, is that the Venetian character absorbed, assimilated, and converted to its own originality whatever touched it.

<sup>7</sup> The conditions of art in Flanders—wealthy, bourgeois, proud, free—were not dissimilar to those of art in Venice. The misty flats of Belgium have some of the atmospheric qualities of Venice. As Van Eyck is to the Vivarini, so is Rubens to Paolo Veronese. This expresses the amount of likeness and of difference.

What the Vivarini began, the three Bellini,<sup>8</sup> with Crivelli, Carpaccio, Mansueti, Basaiti, Catena, Cima da Conegliano, Bissolo, Cordegliahi, continued. Bright costumes, distinct and sunny landscapes, broad backgrounds of architecture, large skies, polished armour, gilded cornices, young faces of fisherboys and country girls,<sup>9</sup> grave faces of old men brown with sea-wind and sunlight, withered faces of women hearty in a hale old age, the strong manhood of Venetian senators, the dignity of patrician ladies, the gracefulness of children, the rosy whiteness and amber-coloured tresses of the daughters of the Adriatic and lagoons—these are the source of inspiration to the Venetians of the second period. Mantegna, a few miles distant, at Padua, was working out his ideal of severely classical design. Yet he scarcely touched the manner of the Venetians with his influence, though Gian Bellini was his brother-in-law and pupil, and though his genius, in grasp of matter and in management of composition, soared above his neighbours. Lionardo da Vinci at Milan was perfecting his problems of psychology in painting, offering to the world solutions of the greatest difficulties in the delineation of the spirit by expression. Yet not a trace of Lionardo's subtle play of light and shadow upon thoughtful features can be discerned in the work of the Bellini. For them the mysteries of the inner and the outer world had no attraction. The externals of a full and vivid existence fascinated their imagination. Their poetry and their piety were alike simple and objective. How to depict the world as it is seen—a miracle of varying lights and melting hues, a pageant substantial to the touch and concrete to the eyes, a combination of forms defined by colours more than outlines—was their task. They did not reach their end by anatomy, analysis, and reconstruction. They undertook to paint just what they felt and saw.

Very instructive are the wall-pictures of this period, painted not in fresco but on canvas by Carpaccio and Gentile Bellini, for the decoration of the Scuole of S. Ursula and S. Croce.<sup>10</sup> Not only do these bring before us the life of Venice in its manifold reality, but they illustrate the tendency of the Venetian masters to express the actual world, rather than to formulate an ideal of the fancy or to search the secrets of the soul. This realism, if the name can be applied to pictures so poetical as those of Carpaccio, is not, like the Florentine realism, hard and scientific. A natural feeling for grace and a sense of romance inspire the artist, and breathe from every figure that he paints. The type of beauty produced is charming by its negligence and *naïveté*; it is not thought out with pains or toilsomely elaborated.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Jacopo and his sons Gentile and Giovanni.

<sup>9</sup> Notice particularly the Contadina type of S. Catherine in a picture ascribed to Cordegliahi in the Venetian Academy.

<sup>10</sup> These Scuole were the halls of meeting for companies called by the names of patron saints.

<sup>11</sup> Notice in particular, from the series of pictures illustrating the legend of S. Ursula, the very beautiful faces and figures of the saint herself, and her young bridegroom, the Prince of Britain. Attendant squires and pages in these paintings have all the charm of similar subordinate personages in Pinturicchio, with none of his affectation.

Among the loveliest motives used in the altar-pieces of this period might be mentioned the boy-angels playing flutes and mandolines beneath Madonna on the steps of her throne. There are usually three of them, seated, or sometimes standing. They hold their instruments of music as though they had just ceased from singing, and were ready to recommence at the pleasure of their mistress. Meanwhile there is a silence in the celestial company, through which the still voice of the praying heart is heard, a silence corresponding to the hushed mood of the worshipper.<sup>12</sup> The children are accustomed to the holy place; therefore their attitudes are both reverent and natural. They are more earthly than Fra Angelico's melodists, and yet they are not precisely of human lineage. It is not, perhaps, too much to say that they strike the keynote of Venetian devotion, at once real and devoid of pietistic rapture.

Gian Bellini brought the art of this second period to completion. In his sacred pictures the reverential spirit of early Italian painting is combined with a feeling for colour and a dexterity in its manipulation peculiar to Venice. Bellini cannot be called a master of the full Renaissance. He falls into the same class as Francia and Perugino, who adhered to *quattrocento* modes of thought and sentiment, while attaining at isolated points to the freedom of the Renaissance. In him the colourists of the next age found an absolute teacher; no one has surpassed him in the difficult art of giving tone to pure tints in combination. There is a picture of Bellini's in S. Zaccaria at Venice—Madonna enthroned with Saints—where the skill of the colourist may be said to culminate in unsurpassable perfection. The whole painting is bathed in a soft but luminous haze of gold; yet each figure has its individuality of treatment, the glowing fire of S. Peter contrasting with the pearly coolness of the drapery and flesh-tints of the Magdalen. No brush-work is perceptible. Surface and substance have been elaborated into one harmonious richness that defies analysis. Between this picture, so strong in its smoothness, and any masterpiece of Velasquez, so rugged in its strength, what a wide abyss of inadequate half-achievement, of smooth feebleness and feeble ruggedness, exists!

Giorgione, did we but possess enough of his authentic works to judge by, would be found the first painter of the true Renaissance among the Venetians, the inaugurator of the third and great period.<sup>13</sup> He died at the age of thirty-six, the inheritor of unfulfilled renown. Time has destroyed the last vestige of his frescoes. Criticism has reduced the number of his genuine easel pictures to half a dozen. He exists as a great name. The part he played in the development of Venetian art was similar to that of Marlowe in the history of our drama. He first

<sup>12</sup> The most beautiful of these *angiolini*, with long flakes of flaxen hair falling from their foreheads, are in a *Sacra Conversazione* of Carpaccio's in the Academy. Gian Bellini's, in many similar pictures, are of the same delicacy.

<sup>13</sup> What follows above about Giorgione is advanced with diffidence, since the name of no other great painter has been so freely used to cover the works of his inferiors.

cut painting altogether adrift from mediæval moorings, and launched it on the waves of the Renaissance liberty. While equal as a colourist to Bellini, though in a different and more sensuous region, Giorgione, by the variety and inventiveness of his conception, proved himself a painter of the calibre of Titian. Sacred subjects he seems to have but rarely treated, unless such purely idyllic pictures as the 'Finding of Moses' in the Uffizzi, and the 'Meeting of Jacob and Rachel' at Dresden deserve the name. Allegories of deep and problematic meaning, the key whereof has to be found in states of the emotion rather than in thoughts, delighted him. He may be said to have invented the Venetian species of romance picture, where an episode in a novella forms the motive of the painting.<sup>14</sup> Nor was he deficient in tragic power, as the tremendous study for a Lucrece in the Uffizzi collection sufficiently proves. In his drawings he models the form without outline by massive distribution of light and dark. In style they are the very opposite of Lionardo's clearly defined studies touched with the metal point upon prepared paper. They suggest colouring, and are indeed the designs of a great colourist, who saw things under the conditions of their tints and tone.

Of the undisputed pictures by Giorgione, the grandest is the 'Monk at the Clavichord,' in the Pitti Palace at Florence.<sup>15</sup> The young man has his fingers on the keys; he is modulating in a mood of grave and sustained emotion; his head is turned away towards an old man standing near him. On the other side of the instrument is a boy. These two figures are but foils and adjuncts to the musician in the middle; and the whole interest of his face lies in its concentrated feeling—the very soul of music, as expressed in Mr. Robert Browning's 'Abt Vogler,' passing through his eyes. This power of painting the portrait of an emotion, of depicting by the features a deep and powerful but tranquil moment of the inner life, must have been possessed by Giorgione in an eminent degree. We find it again in the so-called 'Begrüssung' of the Dresden Gallery.<sup>16</sup> The picture is a large landscape. Jacob and Rachel meet and salute each other with a kiss. But the shepherd lying beneath

<sup>14</sup> Lord Lansdowne's Giorgionesque picture of a young man crowned with vine, playing and singing to two girls in a garden, for example. The celebrated Concert of the Louvre Gallery, so charming for its landscape and so voluptuous in its dreamy sense of Arcadian luxury, is given by Crowe and Cavalcaselle to an imitator of Sebastian del Piombo. See *History of Painting in North Italy*, vol. ii. p. 147.

<sup>15</sup> Under the fire of Crowe and Cavalcaselle's destructive criticism, it would require more real courage than I possess to speak of the 'Entombment' in the Monte di Pietà at Treviso as genuine. Coarse and unselect as are the types of the boy angels, as well as of the young athletic giant, who plays the part in it of the dead Christ, this is a truly grandiose and striking picture. Nothing proves the average greatness of the Venetian masters more than the possibility of attributing such compositions to obscure and subordinate craftsmen of the school.

<sup>16</sup> Crowe and Cavalcaselle assign this picture with some confidence and with fair show of reason, to Cariani, on whom again they father the frescoes at Colleoni's Castle of Malpaga. I have ventured to notice it above in connection with Giorgione, since it exhibits some of the most striking Giorgionesque qualities, and shows the ascendancy of his imagination over the Venetian School.

the shadow of a chestnut tree beside a well has a whole Arcadia of intense yearning in the eyes of sympathy he fixes on the lovers. Something of this faculty, it may be said in passing, descended to Bonifazio, whose romance pictures are among the most charming products of Venetian art, and one of whose singing women in the feast of Dives has the Giorgionesque fulness of inner feeling.

Fate has dealt less unkindly with Titian, Tintoret, and Veronese than with Giorgione. The works of these artists, in whom the Venetian Renaissance attained completion, have been preserved in large numbers and in excellent condition. Chronologically speaking, Titian, the contemporary of Giorgione, precedes Tintoretto, and Tintoretto is somewhat earlier than Veronese.<sup>17</sup> But for the purpose of criticism the three painters may be considered together as the representatives of three marked aspects in the fully developed Venetian style.

Tintoretto, called by the Italians the thunderbolt of painting, because of his vehement impulsiveness and rapidity of execution, soars above his brethren by the faculty of pure imagination. It was he who brought to its perfection the poetry of *chiaroscuro*, expressing moods of passion and emotion by brusque lights, luminous half-shadows, and semi-opaque darkness, no less unmistakably than Beethoven by symphonic modulations. He too engrafted on the calm and natural Venetian manner something of the Michael Angelesque sublimity, and sought to vary by dramatic movement the romantic motives of his school. In his work, more than in that of his contemporaries, Venetian art ceased to be decorative and idyllic.

Veronese elevated pageantry to the height of serious art. His domain is noonday sunlight ablaze on sumptuous dresses and Palladian architecture. Where Tintoretto is dramatic, he is scenic. Titian, in a wise harmony, without either the Æschylean fury of Tintoretto, or the material gorgeousness of Veronese, realised an ideal of pure beauty. Continuing the traditions of Bellini and Giorgione, with a breadth of treatment, and a vigour of well-balanced faculties peculiar to himself, Titian gave to colour in landscape and the human form a sublime yet sensuous poetry no other painter in the world has reached.

Tintoretto and Veronese are, both of them, excessive. The imagination of Tintoretto is too passionate and daring; it scathes and blinds like lightning. The sense of splendour in Veronese is overpoweringly pompous. Titian's exquisite humanity, his large and sane nature, gives proper value to the imaginative and the scenic elements of the Venetian style, without exaggerating either. In his masterpieces thought, colour, sentiment, and composition—the spiritual and technical elements of art—exist in perfect balance; one harmonious tone is given to all the parts of his production, nor can it be said that any quality asserts itself to the injury of the rest. Titian, the Sophocles of painting, has infused

<sup>17</sup> Giorgione, b. 1478; d. 1511. Titian, b. 1477, d. 1576. Tintoretto, b. 1512; d. 1594. Veronese, b. 1530; d. 1588.

into his pictures the spirit of music, the Dorian mood of flutes and soft recorders, making power incarnate in a form of grace.

Round these great men are grouped a host of secondary but distinguished painters—Palma with his golden-haired large-bosomed sirens; idyllic Bonifazio; dramatic Pordenone, whose frescoes are all motion and excitement; Paris Bordone, who mingled on his canvas cream and mulberry juice and sunbeams; the Robusti, the Caliari, the Bassani, and others whom it would be tedious to mention. One breath, one afflatus, inspired them all; and it is due to this coherence in their style and inspiration that the school of Venice, taken as a whole, can show more masterpieces by artists of the second class than any other in Italy. Superior or inferior as they may relatively be among themselves, each bears the indubitable stamp of the Venetian Renaissance, and produces work of a quality that raises him to high rank among the painters of the world. In the same way the spirit of the Renaissance, passing over the dramatists of our Elizabethan age, enabled intellects of average force to take rank in the company of the noblest. Ford, Massinger, Heywood, Decker, Webster, Fletcher, Tourneur, Marston, are seated round the throne at the feet of Shakspeare, Marlowe, and Jonson.

In order to penetrate the characteristics of Venetian art more thoroughly, it will be needful to enter into detailed criticism of the three chief masters who command the school. To begin with Veronese. His canvases are nearly always large—filled with figures of the size of life, massed together in groups or extended in long lines beneath white marble colonnades, which enclose spaces of clear sky and silvery clouds. Armour, shot silks and satins, brocaded canopies, banners, plate, fruit, sceptres, crowns, all things, in fact, that burn and glitter in the sun, form the habitual furniture of his pictures. Rearing horses, dogs, dwarfs, cats, when occasion serves, are used to add reality, vivacity, grotesqueness to his scenes. His men and women are large, well proportioned, vigorous—eminent for pose and gesture rather than for grace or loveliness—distinguished by adult more than adolescent qualities.

Veronese has no choice type of beauty for either sex. We find in him, on the contrary, a somewhat coarse display of animal force in men, and of superb voluptuousness in women. He prefers to paint women draped in gorgeous raiment, as if he had not felt the beauty of the nude. Their faces are too frequently unrefined and empty of expression. His noblest creatures are men of about twenty-five, manly, brawny, crisp-haired, full of nerve and blood. In all this Veronese resembles Rubens. But he does not, like Rubens, strike us as gross, sensual, fleshly;<sup>18</sup> he remains proud, powerful, and frigidly materialistic. He raises neither repulsion nor desire, but displays with the calm strength of art the empire of the mundane spirit. All the equipage of wealth and worldliness, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life—such a vision as the fiend offered to Christ on the mountain of temptation; this is Ver-

<sup>18</sup> I cannot, for example, imagine Veronese painting anything like Rubens' two pictures of the 'Last Judgment' at Munich.



onese's realm. Again, he has no flashes of poetic imagination like Tintoretto; but his grip on the realities of the world, his faculty for idealising prosaic magnificence, is even greater.

Veronese was precisely the painter suited to a nation of merchants, in whom the associations of the counting-house and the exchange mingled with the responsibilities of the Senate and the passions of princes. He never portrayed vehement emotions. There are no brusque movements, no extended arms, like those of Tintoretto's Magdalen in the 'Pietà' at Milan, in his pictures. His Christs and Maries and martyrs of all sorts are composed, serious, courtly, well-fed personages, who, like people of the world accidentally overtaken by some tragic misfortune, do not stoop to distortions or express more than a grave surprise, a decorous sense of pain.<sup>19</sup> His angelic beings are equally earthly.

The Venetian Rothschilds no doubt preferred the ceremonial to the imaginative treatment of sacred themes; and to do him justice, Veronese did not make what would in his case have been the mistake of choosing the tragedies of the Bible for representation. It is the story of Esther, with its royal audiences, coronations, and processions; the marriage feast at Cana; the banquet in the house of Levi, that he selects by preference. Even these themes he removes into a region far from Biblical associations. His *mise en scène* is invariably borrowed from luxurious Italian palaces—large open courts and *loggie*, crowded with guests and lacqueys—tables profusely laden with gold and silver plate. The same love of display led him to delight in allegory—not allegory of the deep and mystic kind, but of the pompous and processional, in which Venice appears enthroned among the deities, or Jupiter fulminates against the vices, or the geni of the arts are personified as handsome women and blooming boys. In dealing with mythology, again, it is not its poetry that he touches; he uses the tale of Europa, for example, as the motive for rich toilettes and delightful landscape, choosing the moment that has least in it of pathos. These being the prominent features of his style, it remains to be said that what is really great in Veronese is the sobriety of his imagination and the solidity of his workmanship. Amid so much that is distracting, he never loses command over his subject; nor does he degenerate into fulsome rhetoric.

Tintoretto is not at home in this somewhat vulgar region of ceremonial grandeur. He requires both thought and fancy as the stimulus to his creative effort. He cannot be satisfied with reproducing, even in the noblest combinations, merely what he sees around him of resplendent and magnificent. There must be scope for poetry in the conception and for audacity in the projection of his subject, something that shall rouse the prophetic faculty and evoke the seer in the artist, or Tintoretto does not rise to his own altitude. Accordingly we find that, in contrast with Veronese, he selects by preference the most tragic and dramatic subjects to be found in sacred history. The Crucifixion,

<sup>19</sup> For his sacred types see the 'Marriage at Cana' in the Louvre, the little 'Crucifixion' and the 'Baptism' of the Pitti, and the 'Martyrdom of S. Agata' in the Uffizi.

with its agonising deity and prostrate groups of women, sunk below the grief of tears;—the Temptation in the wilderness, with its passionate contrast of the grey-robed Man of Sorrows and the ruby-winged, voluptuous fiend;—the Temptation of Adam in Eden, a glowing allegory of the fascination of the spirit by the flesh;—Paradise, a tempest of souls, whirled like Lucretian atoms or gold dust in sunbeams by the celestial forces that perform the movement of the spheres;—the Destruction of the world, where all the fountains and rivers and lakes and seas of earth have formed one cataract, that thunders with cities and nations on its rapids down a bottomless gulf; while all the winds and hurricanes of the air have grown into one blast, that carries men like dead leaves up to judgment;—the Plague of the fiery serpents, with multitudes encoiled and writhing on a burning waste of sand;—the Massacre of the Innocents, with its spilth of blood on slippery pavements of porphyry and serpentine;—the Delivery of the tables of the law to Moses amid clouds on Sinai, a white ascetic, lightning-smitten man emerging in the glory of apparent godhead;—the anguish of the Magdalen above her martyred God;—the solemn silence of Christ before the throne of Pilate;—the rushing of the wings of Seraphim, and the clangour of the trumpet that awakes the dead;—these are the soul-stirring themes that Tintoretto handles with the ease of mastery.<sup>20</sup>

Meditating upon Tintoretto's choice of such subjects, we feel that the profoundest characteristic of his genius is the determination toward motives pre-eminently poetic rather than proper to the figurative arts. The poet imagines a situation in which the intellectual or emotional life is paramount, and the body is subordinate. The painter selects situations in which physical form is of the first importance, and a feeling or a thought is suggested. But Tintoretto grapples immediately with poetical ideas; and he often fails to realise them fully through the inadequacy of painting as a medium for such matter. Moses, in the drama of the 'Golden Calf,' for instance, is a poem, not a true picture.<sup>21</sup> The pale ecstatic stretching out emaciated arms, presents no beauty of attitude or outline. Energy of thought is conspicuous in the figure; and reflection is needed to bring out the purpose of the painter.<sup>22</sup>

It is not, however, only in the region of the vast, tempestuous, and tragic that Tintoretto finds himself at home. He is equal to every task that can be imposed upon the imagination. Provided only that the spiritual fount be stirred, the jet of living water gushes forth, pure, inexhaustible, and limpid. In his 'Marriage of Bacchus and Ariadne,' that most perfect lyric of the sensuous fancy from which sensuality is

<sup>20</sup> These examples are mostly chosen from the Scuola di S. Rocco and the church of S. Maria dell' Orto at Venice; also from 'Pietàs,' in the Brera and the Pitti, the 'Paradise' of the Ducal Palace, and a sketch for 'Paradise' in the Louvre.

<sup>21</sup> S. Maria dell' Orto.

<sup>22</sup> What is here said about Tintoretto is also true of Michael Angelo. His sculpture in S. Lorenzo, compared with Greek sculpture, the norm and canon of the perfect in that art, may be called an invasion of the realm of poetry or music.

absent;<sup>23</sup> in his 'Temptation of Adam,' that symphony of grey and brown and ivory more lustrous than the hues of sunset; in his 'Miracle of S. Agnes,' that lamb-like maiden with her snow-white lamb among the soldiers and the priests of Rome, Tintoretto has proved beyond all question that the fiery genius of Titanic artists can pierce and irradiate the placid and the tender secrets of the soul with more consummate mastery than falls to the lot of those who make tranquillity their special province.<sup>24</sup>

Paolo Veronese never penetrated to this inner shrine of beauty, this Holiest of Holies where the spiritual graces dwell. He could not paint waxen limbs, with silver lights and golden and transparent mysteries of shadow, like those of Bacchus, Eve, and Ariadne. Titian himself was powerless to imagine movement like that of Aphrodite floating in the air, or of Madonna adjuring Christ in the 'Paradiso,' or of Christ Himself judging by the silent simplicity of his divine attitude the worldly judge at whose tribunal He stands, or of the tempter raising his jewelled arms aloft to dazzle with meretricious brilliancy the impassive God above him, or of Eve leaning in irresistible seductiveness against the fatal tree, or of S. Mark down-rushing through the sky to save the slave that cried to him, or of the Mary who has fallen asleep with folded hands from utter lassitude of agony at the foot of the cross.

It is in these attitudes, movements, gestures, that Tintoretto makes the human form an index and symbol of the profoundest, most tragic, most delicious thought and feeling of the inmost soul. In daylight radiancy and equable colouring he is surpassed perhaps by Veronese. In mastery of every portion of his art, in solidity of execution, and in unwavering hold upon his subject, he falls below the level of Titian. Many of his pictures are unworthy of his genius—hurriedly designed, rapidly dashed upon the canvas, studied by candlelight from artificial models, with abnormal effects of light and dark, hastily daubed with pigments that have not stood the test of time. He was a gigantic *improvisatore*: that is the worst thing we can say of him. But in the swift intuitions of the imagination, in the purities and sublimities of the prophet-poet's soul, neither Veronese nor yet even Titian can approach him.

The greatest difficulty meets the critic who attempts to speak of Titian. To seize the salient characteristics of an artist whose glory it is to offer nothing over-prominent, and who keeps the middle path of

<sup>23</sup> There are probably not few of my readers who, after seeing this painting in the Ducal Palace, will agree with me that it is, if not the greatest, at any rate the most beautiful, oil picture in existence. In no other picture has a poem of feeling and of fancy, a romance of varied lights and shades, a symphony of delicately blended hues, a play of attitude and movement transitory but in no sense forced or violent, been more successfully expressed by means more simple or without effect more satisfying. Something of the mythopœic faculty must have survived in Tintoretto, and enabled him to inspire the Greek tale with this intense vitality of beauty.

<sup>24</sup> The first of these pictures is in the Ducal Palace, the other two in the Academy at Venice.

perfection, is impossible. As complete health may be termed the absence of obtrusive sensation, as virtue has been called the just proportion between two opposite extravagances, so is Titian's art a golden mean of joy unbroken by brusque movements of the passions—a well-tempered harmony in which no thrilling note suggests the possibility of discord. In his work the world and men cease to be merely what they are; he makes them what they ought to be: and this he does by separating what is beautiful in sensuous life from its alloy of painful meditation and of burdensome endeavour. The disease of thought is unknown in his kingdom; no divisions exist between the spirit and the flesh; the will is thwarted by no obstacles. When we think of Titian, we are irresistibly led to think of music. His 'Assumption of Madonna' (the greatest single oil-painting in the world, if we except Raphael's 'Madonna di San Sisto') can best be described as a symphony—a symphony of colour, where every hue is brought into harmonious combination—a symphony of movement, where every line contributes to melodious rhythm—a symphony of light without a cloud—a symphony of joy in which the heavens and earth sing Hallelujah. Tintoretto, in the Scuola di San Rocco, painted an 'Assumption of the Virgin' with characteristic energy and impulsiveness. A group of agitated men around an open tomb, a rush of air and clash of seraph wings above, a blaze of glory, a woman borne with sideways-swaying figure from darkness into light;—that is his picture, all *brio*, excitement, speed. Quickly conceived, hastily executed, this painting (so far as clumsy restoration suffers us to judge) bears the impress of its author's impetuous genius. But Titian worked by a different method. On the earth, among the Apostles, there is action enough and passion; ardent faces straining upward, impatient men raising impotent arms and vainly divesting themselves of their mantles, as though they too might follow her they love. In heaven is radiance, half eclipsing the archangel who holds the crown, and revealing the father of spirits in an aureole of golden fire. Between earth and heaven, amid choirs of angelic children, rises the mighty mother of the faith of Christ, who was Mary and is now a goddess, ecstatic yet tranquil, not yet accustomed to the skies, but far above the grossness and the incapacities of earth. Her womanhood is so complete that those for whom the meaning of her Catholic legend is lost, may hail in her humanity personified.

The grand manner can reach no further than in this picture—serene, composed, meditated, enduring, yet full of dramatic force and of profound feeling. Whatever Titian chose to touch, whether it was classical mythology or portrait, history or sacred subject, he treated in this large and healthful style. It is easy to tire of Veronese; it is possible to be fatigued by Tintoretto. Titian, like nature, waits not for moods or humours in the spectator. He gives to the mind joy of which it can never weary, pleasures that cannot satiate, a satisfaction not to be repented of, a sweetness that will not pall. The least instructed and the simple feel his influence as strongly as the wise or learned.

In the course of this attempt to describe the specific qualities of Tintoretto, Veronese, and Titian, I have been more at pains to distinguish differences than to point out similarities. What they had in common was the Renaissance spirit as this formed itself in Venice. Nowhere in Italy was art more wholly emancipated from obedience to ecclesiastical traditions, without losing the character of genial and natural piety. Nowhere was the Christian history treated with a more vivid realism, harmonised more simply with pagan mythology, or more completely purged of mysticism. The Umbrian devotion felt by Raphael in his boyhood, the prophecy of Savonarola, and the Platonism of Ficino absorbed by Michael Angelo at Florence, the scientific preoccupations of Lionardo and the antiquarian interests of Mantegna, were all alike unknown at Venice. Among the Venetian painters there was no conflict between art and religion, or art and curiosity—no reaction against previous pietism, no perplexity of conscience, no confusion of aims. Titian, Tintoretto, and Veronese were children of the people, men of the world, men of pleasure; wealthy, urbane, independent, pious:—they were all these by turns; but they were never mystics, scholars, or philosophers. In their æsthetic ideal religion found a place, nor was sensuality rejected; but the religion was sane and manly, the sensuality was vigorous and virile. Not the intellectual greatness of the Renaissance, but its happiness and freedom, was what they represented.

## CHAPTER VIII

### LIFE OF MICHAEL ANGELO

*Contrast of Michael Angelo and Cellini—Parentage and Boyhood of Michael Angelo—Work with Ghirlandajo—Gardens of S. Marco—The Medicean Circle—Early Essays in Sculpture—Visit to Bologna—First Visit to Rome—The ‘Pietà’ of S. Peter’s—Michael Angelo as a Patriot and a Friend of the Medici—Cartoon for the Battle of Pisa—Michael Angelo and Julius II.—The Tragedy of the Tomb—Design for the Pope’s Mausoleum—Visit to Carrara—Flight from Rome—Michael Angelo at Bologna—Bronze Statue of Julius—Return to Rome—Ceiling of the Sistine Chapel—Greek and Modern Art—Raphael—Michael Angelo and Leo X.—S. Lorenzo—The new Sacristy—Circumstances under which it was designed and partly finished—Meaning of the Allegories—Incomplete state of Michael Angelo’s Marbles—Paul III.—The ‘Last Judgment’—Critiques of Contemporaries—The Dome of S. Peter’s—Vittoria Colonna—Tommaso Cavalieri—Personal Habits of Michael Angelo—His Emotional Nature—Last Illness.*

THE life of Italian artists at the time of the Renaissance may be illustrated by two biographies. Michael Angelo Buonarroti and Benvenuto Cellini were almost opposite in all they thought and felt, experienced and aimed at. The one impressed his own strong personality on art; the other reflected the light and shadow of the age in the record of his manifold existence. Cellini hovered, like some strong-winged creature, on the surface of human activity, yielding himself to every impulse, seeking every pleasure, and of beauty feeling only the rude animal compulsion. Deep philosophic thoughts, ideas of death and judgment, the stern struggles of the soul, encompassed Michael Angelo; the service of beauty was with him religion. Cellini was the creature of the moment—the glass and mirror of corrupt, enslaved, yet still resplendent Italy. In Michael Angelo the genius of the Renaissance culminated; but his character was rather that of an austere Republican, free and solitary amid the multitudes of slaves and courtiers. Michael Angelo made art the vehicle of lofty and soul-shaking thought. Cellini brought the fervour of an inexhaustibly active nature to the service of sensuality, and taught his art to be the handmaid of a soulless paganism. In these two men, therefore, we study two aspects of their age. How far both were exceptional, need not here be questioned; since their singularity consists not so much in being different from other Italians of the sixteenth century as in concentrating qualities elsewhere scattered and imperfect.

Michael Angelo was born in 1475 at Caprese, among the mountains of the Casentino, where his father Lodovico held the office of Podestà. His ancestry was honourable: the Buonarroti even claimed descent, but

apparently without due reason, from the princely house of Canossa.<sup>1</sup> His mother gave him to be suckled by a stone-cutter's wife at Settignano, so that in after days he used to say that he had drawn in the love of chisels and mallets with his nurse's milk. As he grew, the boy developed an invincible determination towards the arts. Lodovico from motives of pride and prudence opposed his wishes, but without success. Michael Angelo made friends with the lad Granacci, who was apprenticed to Domenico Ghirlandajo, and at last induced his father to sign articles for him to the same painter. In Ghirlandajo's workshop he learned the rudiments of art, helping in the execution of the frescoes at S. Maria Novella, until such time as the pupil proved his superiority as a draughtsman to his teacher. The rupture between Michael Angelo and Ghirlandajo might be compared with that between Beethoven and Haydn. In both cases a proud, uncompromising, somewhat scornful student sought aid from a master great in his own line but inferior in fire and originality of genius.<sup>2</sup> In both cases the moment came when pupil and teacher perceived that the eagle could no longer be confined within the hawk's nest, and that henceforth it must sweep the skies alone. After leaving Ghirlandajo's *bottega* at the age of sixteen, Michael Angelo did in truth thenceforward through his life pursue his art alone. Granacci procured him an introduction to the Medici, and the two friends together frequented those gardens of S. Marco where Lorenzo had placed his collection of antiquities. There the youth discovered his vocation. Having begged a piece of marble and a chisel, he struck out the Faun's mask that still is seen in the Bargello. It is worth noticing that Michael Angelo seems to have done no merely prentice-work. Not a fragment of his labour from the earliest to the latest was insignificant, and only such thoughts as he committed to the perishable materials of bronze or paper have been lost. There was nothing tentative in his genius. Into art, as into a rich land, he came and conquered. In like manner, the first sonnet composed by Dante is scarcely less precious than the last lines of the 'Paradiso.' This is true of all the highest artistic natures, who need no preparations and have no period of groping.

Lorenzo de' Medici discerned in Michael Angelo a youth of eminent genius, and took the lad into his own household. The astonished father found himself suddenly provided with a comfortable post and courted for the sake of the young sculptor. In Lorenzo's palace the real education of Michael Angelo began. He sat at the same table with Ficino,

<sup>1</sup> See Vasari, vol. xii. p. 333, and Gotti's *Vita di Michelangelo Buonarroti*, vol. i. p. 4, for a discussion of this claim, and for a letter written by Alessandro Count of Canossa, in 1520, to the artist.

<sup>2</sup> That Michael Angelo was contemptuous to brother artists, is proved by what Torrigiani said to Cellini: 'Aveva per usanza di uccellare tutti quelli che disegnavano.' He called Perugino *gojfo*, told Francia's son that his father made handsomer men by night than by day, and cast in Lionardo's teeth that he could not finish the equestrian statue of the Duke of Milan. It is therefore not improbable that when, according to the legend, he corrected a drawing of Ghirlandajo's, he may have said things unendurable to the elder painter.



Pico, and Poliziano, listening to dialogues on Plato and drinking in the golden poetry of Greece. Greek literature and philosophy, expounded by the men who had discovered them, and who were no less proud of their discovery than Columbus of his passage to the Indies, first moulded his mind to those lofty thoughts which it became the task of his life to express in form. At the same time he heard the preaching of Savonarola. In the Duomo and the cloister of S. Marco another portion of his soul was touched, and he acquired that deep religious tone which gives its majesty and terror to the Sistine. Much in the same way was Milton educated by the classics in conjunction with the Scriptures. Both of these austere natures assimilated from pagan art and Jewish prophecy the twofold elements they needed for their own imaginative life. Both Michael Angelo and Milton, in spite of their parade of classic style, were separated from the Greek world by a gulf of Hebrew and of Christian feeling.

While Michael Angelo was thus engaged in studying antique sculpture and in listening to Pico and Savonarola, he carved his first bas-relief—a 'Battle of Hercules with the Centaurs,' suggested to him by Poliziano.<sup>3</sup> Meantime Lorenzo died. His successor Piero set the young man, it is said, to model a snow statue, and then melted like a shape of snow himself down from his pedestal of power in Florence. Upon the expulsion of the tyrant and the proclamation of the new republic, it was dangerous for house-friends of the Casa Medici to be seen in the city. Michael Angelo, therefore, made his way to Bologna, where he spent some months in the palace of Gian Francesco Aldovrandini, studying Dante and working at an angel for the shrine of S. Dominic. As soon, however, as it seemed safe to do so, he returned to Florence; and to this period belongs the statue of the 'Sleeping Cupid,' which was sold as an antique to the Cardinal Raffaello Riario.

A dispute about the price of this 'Cupid' took Michael Angelo in 1496 to Rome, where it was destined that the greater portion of his life should be spent, and his noblest works of art should be produced. Here, while the Borgias were turning the Vatican into a den of thieves and harlots, he executed the purest of all his statues—a 'Pietà' in marble.<sup>4</sup> Christ is lying dead upon his mother's knees. With her right arm she supports his shoulders; her left hand is gently raised as though to say, 'Behold and see!' All that art can do to make death beautiful and grief sublime, is achieved in this masterpiece, which was never surpassed by Michael Angelo in later years. Already, at the age of four-and-twenty, he had matured his 'terrible manner.' Already were invented in his brain that race of superhuman beings, who became the hieroglyphs of his impassioned utterance. Madonna has the small head

<sup>3</sup> Engraved in outline in Harford's *Illustrations of the Genius of Michael Angelo Buonarroti*, Colnaghi, 1857.

<sup>4</sup> This group, placed in S. Peter's, was made for the French Cardinal de Saint Denys. It should be said that the first work of Michael Angelo in Rome was the 'Bacchus' now in the Florentine Bargello, executed for Jacopo Gallo, a Roman gentleman.

and heroic torso used by this master to symbolise force. We feel she has no difficulty in holding the dead Christ upon her ample lap and in her powerful arms. Yet while the 'Pietà' is wholly Michael Angelesque, we find no lack of repose, none of those contorted lines that are commonly urged against his manner. It is a sober and harmonious composition, combining the profoundest religious feeling with classical tranquillity of expression. Again, though the group is forcibly original, this effect of originality is produced, as in all the best work of the golden age, not by new and startling conception, but by the handling of an old and well-worn motive with the grandeur of consummate style. What the genius of Italian sculpture had for generations been striving after finds its perfect realisation here. It was precisely by thus crowning the endeavours of antecedent artists—by bringing the opening buds of painting and sculpture to full blossom, and exhausting the resources of a long-sustained and common inspiration, that the great masters proved their supremacy and rendered an advance beyond their vantage ground impossible. To those who saw and comprehended this 'Pietà' in 1500, it must have been evident that a new power of portraying the very soul had been manifested in sculpture—a power unknown to the Greeks because it lay outside the sphere of their spiritual experience, and unknown to modern artists because it was beyond their faculties of execution and conception. Yet who in Rome, among the courtiers of the Borgias, had brain or heart to understand these things?

In 1501 Michael Angelo returned to Florence, where he stayed until the year 1505. This period was fruitful of results on which his after fame depended. The great statue of 'David,' the two unfinished medallions of Madonna in relief, the 'Holy Family of the Tribune' painted for Angelo Doni, and the Cartoon of the 'Battle of Pisa' were now produced; and no man's name, not even Lionardo's, stood higher in esteem thenceforward. It will be remembered that Savonarola was now dead, but that his constitution still existed under the presidency of Pietro Soderini—the *non mai abbastanza lodato Cavaliere*, as Pitti calls him, the *anima sciocca* of Machiavelli's epigram.<sup>5</sup> Since Michael Angelo at this time was employed in the service of masters who had superseded his old friends and patrons, it may be well to review here his attitude in general toward the house of Medici. Throughout his lifetime there continued a conflict between the artist and the citizen—the artist owing education and employment to successive members of that house, the citizen resenting their despotism and doing all that in him lay at times to keep them out of Florence. As a patriot, as the student of Dante and the disciple of Savonarola, Michael Angelo detested tyrants.<sup>6</sup> One

<sup>5</sup> Pitti approved of the form of government represented by Soderini. Machiavelli despised the want of decision that made him quit Florence, and the *εὐθελία* of the man. Hence their curiously conflicting phrases.

<sup>6</sup> See the chapter entitled 'Della Malitia e pessime Condizioni del Tyranno,' in Savonarola's 'Tractato circa el reggimento e governo della Citta di Firenze composto ad instantia delli excelsi Signori al tempo di Giuliano Salviati, Gonfaloniere di Justitia.' A more terrible picture has never been drawn by any analyst of human vice and cruelty and weakness.

of his earliest madrigals, conceived as a dialogue between Florence and her exiles, expresses his mind so decidedly that I have ventured to translate it;<sup>7</sup> the exiles first address Florence, and she answers:—

‘Lady, for joy of lovers numberless  
Thou wast created fair as angels are.  
Sure God hath fallen asleep in heaven afar,  
When one man calls the boon of many his.  
Give back to streaming eyes  
The daylight of Thy face, that seems to shun  
Those who must live defrauded of their bliss!’

‘Vex not your pure desire with tears and sighs;  
For he who robs you of my light, hath none.  
Dwelling in fear, sin hath no happiness;  
Since amid those who love, their joy is less  
Whose great desire great plenty still curtails,  
Than theirs who, poor, have hope that never fails.’

As an artist, owing his advancement to Lorenzo, he had accepted favours binding him by ties of gratitude to the Medici, and even involving him in the downfall of their house. For Leo X. he undertook to build the façade of S. Lorenzo and the Laurentian Library. For Clement VII. he began the statues of the Dukes of Urbino and Nemours. Yet, while accepting these commissions from Medicean Popes, he could not keep his tongue from speaking openly against their despotism. After the sack of Prato it appears from his correspondence that he had exposed himself to danger by some expression of indignation.<sup>8</sup> This was in 1512, when Soderini fled and left the gates of Florence open to the Cardinal Giovanni de’ Medici. During the siege of Florence in 1529 he fortified Samminiato, and allowed himself to be named one of the Otto di Guerra chosen for the express purpose of defending Florence against the Medici.<sup>9</sup> After the fall of the city he made peace with Clement by consenting to finish the tombs of S. Lorenzo. Yet, while doing all he could to save those insignificant dukes from oblivion by the immortality of his art, Michael Angelo was conscious of his own and his country’s shame. The memorable lines placed in the mouth of his ‘Night,’ sufficiently display his feeling after the final return of the Medici in 1530:<sup>10</sup>—

Sweet is my sleep, but more to be mere stone,  
So long as ruin and dishonour reign;  
To hear nought, to feel nought, is my great gain:  
Then wake me not, speak in an under-tone.

<sup>7</sup> Guasti’s edition of the *Rime*, p. 26.

<sup>8</sup> He defends himself thus in a letter to Lodovico Buonarroti: ‘Del caso dei Medici io non ò mai parlato contra di loro cosa nessuna, se non in quel modo che s’è parlato generalmente per ogn’ uomo, come fu del caso di Prato; che se le pietre avessin saputo parlare, n’ avrebbero parlato.’

<sup>9</sup> It seems clear from the correspondence in the Archivio Buonarroti, recently published, that when Michael Angelo fled from Florence to Venice in 1529, he did so under the pressure of no ignoble panic, but because his life was threatened by a traitor, acting possibly at the secret instance of Malatesta Baglioni. See Heath Wilson, pp. 326-330.

<sup>10</sup> See Guasti, p. 4.

When Clement VII. died, the last real representative of Michael Angelo's old patrons perished, and the sculptor was free to quit Florence for ever. During the reign of Duke Cosimo he never set foot in his native city. It is thus clear that the patriot, the artist, and the man of honour were at odds in him. Loyalty obliged him to serve the family to whom he owed so much; he was, moreover, dependent for opportunities of doing great work on the very men whose public policy he execrated. Hence arose a compromise and a confusion, hard to accommodate with our conception of his upright and unyielding temper. Only by voluntary exile, and after age had made him stubborn to resist seductive offers, could Michael Angelo act up to the promptings of his heart and declare himself a citizen who held no truce with tyrants. I have already in this work had occasion to compare Dante, Michael Angelo, and Machiavelli.<sup>11</sup> In estimating the conduct of the two last, it must not be forgotten that, by the action of inevitable causes, republican freedom had become in Italy a thing of the past; and in judging between Machiavelli and Michael Angelo, we have to remember that the sculptor's work involved no sacrifice of principle or self-respect. Carving statues for the tombs of Medicean dukes was a different matter from dedicating the 'Prince' to them.

This digression, though necessary for the right understanding of Michael Angelo's relation to the Medici, has carried me beyond his Florentine residence in 1501-1505. The great achievement of that period was not the 'David,' but the Cartoon for the 'Battle of Pisa.'<sup>12</sup> The hall of the Consiglio Grande had been opened, and one wall had been assigned to Lionardo. Michael Angelo was now invited by the Signory to prepare a design for another side of the state-chamber. When he displayed his cartoon to the Florentines, they pronounced that Da Vinci, hitherto the undisputed prince of painting, was surpassed. It is impossible for us to form an opinion on this matter, since both cartoons are lost beyond recovery.<sup>13</sup> We only know that, as Cellini

<sup>11</sup> *Age of the Despots*, p. 161.

<sup>12</sup> To these years we must also assign the two unfinished medallions of 'Madonna and the infant Christ,' the circular oil picture of the 'Holy Family,' painted for Angelo Doni, and the beautiful unfinished picture of 'Madonna with the boy Jesus and S. John' in the National Gallery. The last of these works is one of the loveliest of Michael Angelo's productions, whether we regard the symmetry of its composition or the refinement of its types. The two groups of two boys standing behind the central group on either hand of the Virgin, have incomparable beauty of form. The supreme style of the Sistine is here revealed to us in embryo. Whether the 'Entombment,' also unfinished, and also in the National Gallery, belongs to this time, and whether it be Michael Angelo's at all, is a matter for the experts to decide. To my perception, it is quite unworthy of the painter of the Doni 'Holy Family,' nor can I think that his want of practice in oil-painting will explain its want of charm and vigour.

<sup>13</sup> It has long been believed that Baccio Bandinelli destroyed Michael Angelo's; but Grimm, in his *Life of the sculptor* (vol. i. p. 376, Eng. Tr.), adduces solid arguments against this legend. A few studies, together with the engravings of portions by Marc Antonio and Agostino Veneziano, enable us to form a notion of the composition. At Holkham there is an old copy of the larger portion of the cartoon, which has been engraved by Schiavonetti, and reproduced in Harford's *Illustrations*, plate x.

says, 'while they lasted, they formed the school of the whole world,'<sup>14</sup> and made an epoch in the history of art. When we inquire what was the subject of Michael Angelo's famous picture, we find that he had aimed at representing nothing of more moment than a group of soldiers suddenly surprised by a trumpet-call to battle, while bathing in the Arno—a crowd of naked men in every posture indicating haste, anxiety, and struggle. Not for its intellectual meaning, not for its colour, not for its sentiment, was this design so highly prized. Its science won the admiration of artists and the public. At this period of the Renaissance the bold and perfect drawing of the body gave an exquisite delight. Hence, perhaps, Vasari's vapid talk about 'stravaganti attitudini,' 'divine figure,' 'scorticamenti,' and so forth—as if the soul of figurative art were in such matters. The science of Michael Angelo, which in his own mind was sternly subordinated to thought, had already turned the weaker heads of his generation.<sup>15</sup> A false ideal took possession of the fancy, and such criticism as that of Vasari and Pietro Aretino became inevitable.

Meanwhile, a new Pope had been elected, and in 1505 Michael Angelo was once more called to Rome. Throughout his artist's life he oscillated thus between Rome and Florence—Florence the city of his ancestry, and Rome the city of his soul; Florence where he learnt his art, and Rome where he displayed what art can do at its highest. Julius was a patron of different stamp from Lorenzo the Magnificent. He was not learned in book-lore: 'Place a sword in my hand!' he said to the sculptor at Bologna: 'of letters I know nothing.' Yet he was no less capable of discerning excellence than the Medici himself, and his spirit strove incessantly after the accomplishment of vast designs. Between Julius and Michael Angelo there existed a strong bond of sympathy due to community of temperament. Both aimed at colossal achievements in their respective fields of action. The imagination of both was fired by large and simple, rather than luxurious and subtle thoughts. Both were *uomini terribili*, to use a phrase denoting vigour of character made formidable by an abrupt uncompromising temper. Both worked *con furia*, with the impetuosity of dæmonic natures; and both left the impress of their individuality graven indelibly upon their age.

Julius ordered the sculptor to prepare his mausoleum. Michael Angelo asked, 'Where am I to place it?' Julius replied, 'In S. Peter's.' But the old basilica of Christendom was too small for this ambitious pontiff's sepulchre, designed by the audacious artist. It was therefore decreed that a new S. Peter's should be built to hold it. In this way the two great labours of Buonarroti's life were mapped out for him in a moment. But, by a strange contrariety of fate, to Bramante and San Gallo fell

<sup>14</sup> *Vita*, p. 23. Cellini, the impassioned admirer of Michael Angelo, esteemed this cartoon so highly, that he writes: 'Sebbene il divino Michelagnolo fece la gran cappella di Papa Julio da poi, non arrivò mai a questo segno alla meta: la sua virtù non agguinse mai da poi alla forza di quei primi studi.'

<sup>15</sup> The cartoon was probably exhibited in 1505. See Gotti, vol. i. p. 35.

respectively the planning and the spoiling of S. Peter's. It was only in extreme old age that Michael Angelo crowned it with that world's miracle, the dome. The mausoleum, to form a canopy for which the building was designed, dwindled down at last to the statue of 'Moses' thrust out of the way in the church of S. Pietro in Vincoli. 'La tragedia della Sepoltura,' as Condivi aptly terms the history of Giulio's monument, began thus in 1505 and dragged on till 1545.<sup>16</sup> Rarely did Michael Angelo undertake a work commensurate with his creative power, but something came to interrupt its execution; while tasks outside his sphere, for which he never bargained—the painting of the Sistine Chapel, the façade of S. Lorenzo, the fortification of Samminiato—were thrust upon him in the midst of other more congenial labours. What we possess of his achievement is a *torso* of his huge designs.

Giulio's tomb, as he conceived it, would have been the most stupendous monument of sculpture in the world.<sup>17</sup> That mountain of marble covered with figures wrought in stone and bronze, was meant to be the sculptured poem of the thought of Death; no mere apotheosis of Pope Julius, but a pageant of the soul triumphant over the limitations of mortality. All that dignifies humanity—arts, sciences, and laws; the victory that crowns heroic effort; the majesty of contemplation, and the energy of action—was symbolised upon ascending tiers of the great pyramid; while the genii of heaven and earth upheld the open tomb, where lay the dead man waiting for the Resurrection. Of this gigantic scheme only one imperfect drawing now remains.<sup>18</sup> The 'Moses' and the 'Bound Captives'<sup>19</sup> are all that Michael Angelo accomplished. For forty years the 'Moses' remained in his workshop. For forty years he cherished a hope that his plan might still in part be executed, complaining the while that it would have been better for him to have made sulphur matches all his life than to have taken up the desolating artist's trade. 'Every day,' he cries, 'I am stoned as though I had crucified Christ. My youth has been lost, bound hand and foot to this tomb.'<sup>20</sup> It was decreed apparently that Michael Angelo should exist for after ages as a fragment; and such might Pheidias among the Greeks have been, if he had worked for ephemeral Popes and bankrupt princes instead of Pericles. Italy in the sixteenth century, dislocated, distracted, and drained of her material resources, gave no opportunity to artists for the creation of monuments colossal in their unity.

<sup>16</sup> Gotti, pp. 277-282.

<sup>17</sup> Springer, in his essay, *Michael Agnolo in Rome*, p. 21, makes out that this large design was not conceived till after the death of Julius. It is difficult to form a clear notion of the many changes in the plan of the tomb, between 1505 and 1542, when Michael Angelo signed the last contract with the heirs of Julius.

<sup>18</sup> In the Uffizzi at Florence. See Heath Wilson, plate vi.

<sup>19</sup> Boboli Gardens, Bargello, Louvre. These captives are unfinished. The 'Rachel' and 'Leah' at S. Pietro in Vincoli were committed to pupils by Michael Angelo.

<sup>20</sup> 'Che mi fosse messo a fare zolfanelli. . . . Son ogni di lapidato, come se havessi crucifisso Cristo. . . . io mi truovo avere perduta tutta la mia giovinezza legato a questa sepoltura.'

Michael Angelo spent eight months at this period among the stone quarries of Carrara, selecting marble for the Pope's tomb.<sup>21</sup> There his brain, always teeming with gigantic conceptions, suggested to him a new fancy. Could not the headland jutting out beyond Sarzana into the Tyrrhene Sea be carved by his workmen into a Pharos? To transmute a mountain into a statue, holding a city in either hand, had been the dream of a Greek artist. Michael Angelo revived the bold thought; but to execute it would have been almost beyond his power. Meanwhile, in November 1505, the marble was shipped, and the quays of Rome were soon crowded with blocks destined for the mausoleum. But when the sculptor arrived, he found that enemies had been poisoning the Pope's mind against him, and that Julius had abandoned the scheme of the mausoleum. On six successive days he was denied entrance to the Vatican, and the last time with such rudeness that he determined to quit Rome.<sup>22</sup> He hurried straightway to his house, sold his effects, mounted, and rode without further ceremony toward Florence, sending to the Pope a written message bidding him to seek for Michael Angelo elsewhere in future than in Rome. It is related that Julius, anxious to recover what had been so lightly lost, sent several couriers to bring him back.<sup>23</sup> Michael Angelo announced that he intended to accept the Sultan's commission for building a bridge at Pera, and refused to be persuaded to return to Rome. This was at Poggibonsi. When he had reached Florence, Julius addressed himself to Soderini, who, unwilling to displease the Pope, induced Michael Angelo to seek the pardon of the master he had so abruptly quitted. By that time Julius had left the city for the camp; and when Michael Angelo finally appeared before him, fortified with letters from the Signory of Florence, it was at Bologna that they met. 'You have waited thus long, it seems,' said the Pope, well satisfied but surly, 'till we should come ourselves to seek you.' The prelate who had introduced the sculptor now began to make excuses for him, whereupon Julius turned in a fury upon the officious courtier, and had him beaten from his presence. A few days after this encounter Michael Angelo was ordered to cast a bronze statue of Julius for the frontispiece of S. Petronio. The sculptor objected that brass-foundry was not his affair. 'Never mind,' said Julius; 'get to work, and we will cast your statue till it comes out perfect.'<sup>24</sup> Michael Angelo did as he was bid, and the statue was set up in 1508 above the great door of the church. The Pope was seated, with his right hand raised;

<sup>21</sup> Gotti, p. 42. Grimm makes two visits to Carrara in 1505 and 1506, vol. i. pp. 239, 243.

<sup>22</sup> See his letter. Gotti, p. 44.

<sup>23</sup> Our authorities for this episode in Michael Angelo's biography are mainly Vasari and Condivi. Though there may be exaggeration in the legend, it is certain that a correspondence took place between the Pope and the Gonfalonier of Florence, to bring about his return. See Heath Wilson, pp. 79-87, and the letter to Giuliano di San Gallo in Milanesi's *Archivio Buonarroti*, p. 377. Michael Angelo appears to have had some reason to fear assassination in Rome.

<sup>24</sup> See Michael Angelo's letters to Giovan Francesco Fattucci, and his family. Gotti, pp. 55-65.



in the other were the keys. When Julius asked him whether he was meant to bless or curse the Bolognese with that uplifted hand, Buonarroti found an answer worthy of a courtier: 'Your Holiness is threatening this people, if it be not wise.' Less than four years afterwards Julius lost his hold upon Bologna, the party of the Bentivogli returned to power, and the statue was destroyed. A bronze cannon, called the 'Giulia,' was made out of Michael Angelo's masterpiece by the best gunsmith of his century, Alfonso Duke of Ferrara.

It seems that Michael Angelo's flight from Rome in 1506 was due not only to his disappointment about the tomb, but also to his fear lest Julius should give him uncongenial work to do. Bramante, if we may believe the old story, had whispered that it was ill-omened for a man to build his own sepulchre, and that it would be well to employ the sculptor's genius upon the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. Accordingly, on his return to Rome in 1508, this new task was allotted him. In vain did Michael Angelo remind his master of the months wasted in the quarries of Carrara; in vain he pointed to his designs for the monument, and pleaded that he was not a painter by profession.<sup>25</sup> Julius had made up his mind that he should paint the Sistine. Was not the cartoon at Florence a sufficient proof that he could do this if he chose, and had he not learned the art of fresco in the *bottega* of his master Ghirlandajo? Whatever his original reluctance may have been, it was speedily overcome; and the cartoons for the ceiling, projected with the unity belonging to a single great conception, were ready by the summer of 1508.<sup>26</sup>

The difficulty of his new task aroused the artist's energy. If we could accept the legend, whereby contemporaries expressed their admiration for this Titanic labour, we should have to believe the impossible—that Michael Angelo ground his own colours, prepared his own plaster, and completed with his own hand the whole work, after having first conquered the obstacles of scaffolding and vault-painting by machines of his own invention,<sup>27</sup> and that only twenty months were devoted to the execution of a series of paintings almost unequalled in their delicacy,

<sup>25</sup> See the sonnet to Giovanni da Pistoja:—

La mia pittura morta  
Difendi orma', Giovanni, e 'l mio onore,  
Non sendo in loco bon, nè io pittore.

<sup>26</sup> According to the first plan, Michael Angelo bargained with the Pope for twelve Apostles in the lunettes, and another part to be filled with ornament in the usual manner—'dodici Apostoli nelle lunette, e 'l resto un certo partimento ripieno d' adornamenti come si usa.' Michael Angelo, after making designs for this commission, told the Pope he thought the roof would look poor, because the Apostles were poor folk—'perchè furon poveri anche loro.' He then began his cartoons for the vault as it now exists. See the letter to Ser Giovan Francesco Fattucci, in the *Archivio Buonarroti*, Milanese, pp. 426-427. This seems to be the foundation for an old story of the Pope's complaining that the Sistine roof looked poor without gilding, and Michael Angelo's reply that the Biblical personages depicted there were put poor people.

<sup>27</sup> Bramante, the Pope's architect, did in truth fail to construct the proper scaffolding, whether through inability or jealousy. Michael Angelo designed a superior system of his own, which became a model for future architects in similar constructions.

and surpassed by few single masterpieces in extent. What may be called the mythus of the Sistine Chapel has at last been finally disproved, partly by the personal observations of Mr. Heath Wilson, and partly by the publication of Michael Angelo's correspondence.<sup>28</sup> Though some uncertainty remains as to the exact dates of the commencement and completion of the vault, we now know that Michael Angelo continued painting it at intervals during four successive years; and though we are not accurately informed about his helpers, we no longer can doubt that able craftsmen yielded him assistance. On May 10, 1508, he signed a receipt for five hundred ducats advanced by Julius for the necessary expenses of the undertaking; and on the next day he paid ten ducats to a mason for rough plastering and surface-finishing applied to the vault. There is good reason to believe that he began his painting during the autumn of 1508. On November 1, 1509, a certain portion was uncovered to the public; and before the end of the year 1512 the whole was completed. Thus, though the legend of Vasari and Condivi has been stripped of the miraculous by careful observation and keensighted criticism, enough remains to justify the sense of wonder that expressed itself in their exaggerated statements. No one but Michael Angelo could have done what he did in the Sistine Chapel. The conception was entirely his own. The execution, except in subordinate details and in matters pertaining to the mason's craft, was also his. The rapidity with which he laboured was astounding. Mr. Heath Wilson infers from the condition of the plaster and the joinings observable in different parts, that the figure of Adam, highly finished as it is, was painted in three days. Nor need we strip the romance from that time-honoured tale of the great master's solitude. Lying on his back beneath the dreary vault, communing with Dante, Savonarola, and the Hebrew prophets in the intervals of labour, locking up the chapel-doors in order to elude the jealous curiosity of rivals, eating but little and scarcely sleeping, he accomplished in sixteen months the first part of his gigantic task.<sup>29</sup> From time to time Julius climbed the scaffold and inspected the painter's progress. Dreading lest death should come before the work were finished, he kept crying, 'When will you make an end?' 'When I can,' answered the painter. 'You seem to want,' rejoined the petulant old man, 'that I should have you thrown down from the scaffold.' Then Michael Angelo's brush stopped. The machinery was removed, and the frescoes were uncovered in their incompleteness to the eyes of Rome.

Entering the Cappella Sistina, and raising our eyes to sweep the roof, we have above us a long and somewhat narrow oblong space, vaulted

<sup>28</sup> See chapters vi. vii. and viii. of Mr. Charles Heath Wilson's admirable *Life of Michel Angelo*. Aurelio Gotti's *Vita di Michel Agnolo*, and Anton Springer's *Michael Agnolo in Rome*, deserve to be consulted on this passage in the painter's biography.

<sup>29</sup> The conditions under which Michael Angelo worked, without a trained band of pupils, must have struck contemporaries, accustomed to Raphael's crowds of assistants, with a wonder that justified Vasari's emphatic language of exaggeration as to his single-handed labour.

with round arches, and covered from end to end, from side to side, with a network of human forms. The whole is coloured like the dusky, tawny, blueish clouds of thunderstorms. There is no luxury of decorative art;—no gold, no paint-box of vermilion or emerald green, has been lavished here. Sombre and aerial, like shapes condensed from vapour, or dreams begotten by Ixion upon mists of eve or dawn, the phantoms evoked by the sculptor throng that space. Nine compositions, carrying down the sacred history from the creation of light to the beginning of sin in Noah's household, fill the central compartments of the roof. Beneath these, seated on the spandrels, are alternate prophets and sibyls, twelve in all, attesting to the future deliverance and judgment of the world by Christ. The intermediate spaces between these larger masses, on the roof and in the lunettes of the windows, swarm with figures, some naked and some draped—women and children, boys and young men, grouped in tranquil attitudes, or adapting themselves with freedom to their station on the curves and angles of the architecture. In these subordinate creations Michael Angelo deigned to drop the terrible style, in order that he might show how sweet and full of charm his art could be. The grace of colouring, realised in some of those youthful and athletic forms, is such as no copy can represent. Every posture of beauty and of strength, simple or strained, that it is possible for men to assume, has been depicted here. Yet the whole is governed by a strict sense of sobriety. The restlessness of Correggio, the violent attitudinising of Tintoretto, belong alike to another and less noble spirit.

To speak adequately of these form-poems would be quite impossible. Buonarroti seems to have intended to prove by them that the human body has a language, inexhaustible in symbolism—every limb, every feature, and every attitude being a word full of significance to those who comprehend, just as music is a language whereof each note and chord and phrase has correspondence with the spiritual world. It may be presumptuous after this fashion to interpret the design of him who called into existence the heroic population of the Sistine. Yet Michael Angelo has written lines which in some measure justify the reading. This is how he closes one of his finest sonnets to Vittoria Colonna:

Nor hath God deigned to show Himself elsewhere  
More clearly than in human forms sublime;  
Which, since they image Him, compel my love.

Therefore to him a well-shaped hand, or throat, or head, a neck superbly poised on an athletic chest, the sway of the trunk above the hips, the starting of the muscles on the flank, the tendons of the ankle, the outline of the shoulder when the arm is raised, the backward bending of the loins, the curves of a woman's breast, the contours of a body careless in repose or strained for action, were all words pregnant with profoundest meaning, whereby fit utterance might be given to the thoughts that raise man near to God. But, it may be asked, what poems of action as well as feeling are to be expressed in this form-language? The answer

is simple. Paint or carve the body of a man, and, as you do it nobly, you will give the measure of both highest thought and most impassioned deed. This is the key to Michael Angelo's art. He cared but little for inanimate nature. The landscapes of Italy, so eloquent in their sublimity and beauty, were apparently a blank to him. His world was the world of ideas, taking visible form, incarnating themselves in man. One language the master had to serve him in all need—the language of plastic human form; but it was to him a tongue as rich in its variety of accent and of intonation as Beethoven's harmonies.

In the Sistine Chapel, where plastic art is so supreme, we are bound to ask the further question, What was the difference between Michael Angelo and a Greek? The Parthenon with its processions of youths and maidens, its gods and heroes, rejoicing in their strength, and robed with raiment that revealed their living form, made up a symphony of meaning as full as this of Michael Angelo, and far more radiant. The Greek sculptor embraced humanity in his work no less comprehensively than the Italian; and what he had to say was said more plainly in the speech they both could use. But between Pheidias and Michael Angelo lay Christianity, the travail of the world through twenty centuries. Clear as morning, and calm in the unconsciousness of beauty, are those heroes of the youth of Hellas. All is grace, repose, strength shown but not asserted. Michael Angelo's Sibyls and Prophets are old and wrinkled, bowed with thought, consumed by vigils, startled from tranquillity by visions, overburdened with the messages of God. The loveliest among them, the Delphic, lifts dilated eyes, as though to follow dreams that fly upon the paths of trance. Even the young men strain their splendid limbs, and seem to shout or shriek, as if the life in them contained some element of pain. 'He maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire:' this verse rises to our lips when we seek to describe the genii that crowd the cornice of the Sistine Chapel. The human form in the work of Pheidias wore a joyous and sedate serenity; in that of Michael Angelo it is turbid with a strange and awful sense of inbreathed agitation. Through the figure-language of the one was spoken the pagan creed, bright, unperturbed, and superficial. The sculpture of the Parthenon accomplished the transfiguration of the natural man. In the other man awakes to a new life of contest, disillusionment, hope, dread, and heavenward striving. It was impossible for the Greek and the Italian, bearing so different a burden of prophecy, even though they used the same speech, to tell the same tale; and this should be remembered by those critics who cast exaggeration and contortion in the teeth of Michael Angelo. Between the birth of the free spirit in Greece and its second birth in Italy, there yawned a sepulchre wherein the old faiths of the world lay buried and whence Christ had risen.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>30</sup> In speaking of the Sistine I have treated Michael Angelo as a sculptor, and it was a sculptor who designed those frescoes. *Ne io pittore* is his own phrase. Compare an autotype of 'Adam' in the Sistine with one of 'Twilight' in S. Lorenzo: it is clear that in the former Michael Angelo painted what he would have been well pleased to

The star of Raphael, meanwhile, had arisen over Rome. Between the two greatest painters of their age the difference was striking. Michael Angelo stood alone, his own master, fashioned in his own school. A band of artists called themselves by Raphael's name; and in his style we trace the influence of several predecessors. Michael Angelo rarely received visits, frequented no society, formed no pupils, and boasted of no friends at Court. Raphael was followed to the Vatican by crowds of students; his levees were like those of a prince; he counted among his intimates the best scholars and poets of the age; his hand was pledged in marriage to a cardinal's niece. It does not appear that they engaged in petty rivalries, or that they came much into personal contact with each other. While Michael Angelo was so framed that he could learn from no man, Raphael gladly learned of Michael Angelo; and after the uncovering of the Sistine frescoes, his manner showed evident signs of alteration. Julius, who had given Michael Angelo the Sistine, set Raphael to work upon the Stanze. For Julius were painted the 'Miracle of Bolsena' and the 'Expulsion of Heliodorus from the Temple,' scenes containing courtly compliments for the old Pope. No such compliments had been paid by Michael Angelo. Like his great parallel in music, Beethoven, he displayed an almost arrogant contempt for the conventionalities whereby an artist wins the favour of his patrons and the world.

After the death of Julius, Leo X., in character the reverse of his fiery predecessor, and by temperament unsympathetic to the austere Michael Angelo, found nothing better for the sculptor's genius than to set him at work upon the façade of S. Lorenzo at Florence. The better part of the years between 1516 and 1520 was spent in quarrying marble at Carrara, Pietra Santa, and Seravezza. This is the most arid and unfruitful period of Michael Angelo's long life, a period of delays and thwarted schemes and servile labours. What makes the sense of disappointment greater, is that the façade of S. Lorenzo was not even finished.<sup>31</sup> We hurry over this wilderness of wasted months, and arrive at another epoch of artistic production.

Already in 1520 the Cardinal Giulio de' Medici had conceived the notion of building a sacristy in S. Lorenzo to receive the monuments of Cosimo, the founder of the house, Lorenzo the Magnificent, Giuliano Duke of Nemours, Lorenzo Duke of Urbino, Leo X., and himself.<sup>32</sup> To Michael Angelo was committed the design, and in 1521 he began to apply himself to the work. Nine years had now elapsed since the roof of the Sistine chapel had been finished, and during this time Michael Angelo had produced little except the 'Christ' of S. Maria sopra Minerva. This new undertaking occupied him at intervals between 1521 and 1534, a space of time decisive for the fortunes of the Medici in Florence.

carve. A sculptor's genius was needed for the modelling of those many figures; it was, moreover, not a painter's part to deal thus drily with colour.

<sup>31</sup> The Laurentian Library, however, was built in 1524.

<sup>32</sup> See Gotti, pp. 150, 155, 158, 159, for the correspondence which passed upon the subject, and the various alterations in the plan. As in the case of all Michael Angelo's works, except the Sistine, only a small portion of the original project was executed.

Leo died, and Giulio after a few years succeeded him as Clement VII. The bastards of the house, Ippolito and Alessandro, were expelled from Florence in 1527. Rome was sacked by the Imperial troops; then Michael Angelo quitted the statues and helped to defend his native city against the Prince of Orange. After the failure of the Republicans, he was recalled to his labours by command of Clement. Sullenly and sadly he quarried marbles for the sacristy. Sadly and sullenly he used his chisel year by year, making the very stones cry that shame and ruin were the doom of his country. At last in 1534 Clement died. Then Michael Angelo flung down his mallet. The monuments remained unfinished, and the sculptor set foot in Florence no more.<sup>33</sup>

The Sacristy of S. Lorenzo was built by Michael Angelo and panelled with marbles to receive the sculpture he meant to place there.<sup>34</sup> Thus the colossal statues of Giuliano and Lorenzo were studied with a view to their light and shadow as much as to their form; and this is a fact to be remembered by those who visit the chapel where Buonarroti laboured both as architect and sculptor. Of the two Medici, it is not fanciful to say that the 'Duke of Urbino' is the most immovable of spectral shapes eternalised in marble; while the 'Duke of Nemours,' more graceful and elegant, seems intended to present a contrast to this terrible thought-burdened form.<sup>35</sup> The allegorical figures, stretched on segments of ellipses beneath the pedestals of the two dukes, indicate phases of darkness and of light, of death and life. They are two women and two men; tradition names them 'Night' and 'Day,' 'Twilight' and 'Dawning.' Thus in the statues themselves and in their attendant genii we have a series of abstractions, symbolising the sleep and waking of existence, action and thought, the gloom of death, the lustre of life, and the intermediate states of sadness and of hope that form the borderland of both. Life is a dream between two slumbers; sleep is death's twin-brother; night is the shadow of death; death is the gate of life:—such is the mysterious mythology wrought by the sculptor of the modern world in marble. All these figures, by the intensity of their expression, the vagueness of their symbolism, force us to think and question. What, for example, occupies Lorenzo's brain? Bending forward, leaning his chin upon his wrist, placing the other hand upon his knee, on what does he for ever ponder? The sight, as Rogers said well, 'fascinates and is intolerable.' Michael Angelo has shot the beaver of the helmet forward on his forehead, and bowed his head, so as to clothe the face

<sup>33</sup> Cosimo de' Medici found it impossible to induce him to return to Florence. See B. Cellini's Life, p. 436, for his way of receiving the Duke's overtures.

<sup>34</sup> See above, p. 627.

<sup>35</sup> Vasari names the gloomy statue, called by the Italians *Il Penseroso*, 'Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino,' the sprightly one, 'Giuliano, Duke of Nemours,' and this contemporary tradition has been recently confirmed by an inspection of the *Penseroso*'s tomb (see letter to the *Academy*, March 13, 1875, by Mr. Charles Heath Wilson). Grimm, in his *Life of Michael Angelo*, gave plausible æsthetic reasons why we should reverse the nomenclature; but the discovery of two bodies beneath the *Penseroso*, almost certainly those of Lorenzo and his supposed son Alessandro, justifies Vasari. Neither of these statues can be accepted as a portrait.

in darkness. But behind the gloom there is no skull, as Rogers fancied. The whole frame of the powerful man is instinct with some imperious thought. Has he outlived his life and fallen upon everlasting contemplation? Is he brooding, injured and indignant, over his own doom and the extinction of his race? Is he condemned to witness in immortal immobility the woes of Italy he helped to cause? Or has the sculptor symbolised in him the burden of that personality we carry with us in this life and bear for ever when we wake into another world? Beneath this incarnation of oppressive thought there lie, full-length and naked, the figures of Dawn and Twilight, Morn and Evening. So at least they are commonly called: and these names are not inappropriate; for the breaking of the day and the approach of night are metaphors for many transient conditions of the soul. It is only as allegories in a large sense, comprehending both the physical and intellectual order, and capable of various interpretation, that any of these statues can be understood. Even the Dukes do not pretend to be portraits: and hence in part perhaps the uncertainty that has gathered round them. Very tranquil and noble is Twilight: a giant in repose, he meditates, leaning upon his elbow, looking down. But Dawn starts from her couch, as though some painful summons had reached her sunk in dreamless sleep, and called her forth to suffer. Her waking to consciousness is like that of one who has been drowned, and who finds the return to life agony. Before her eyes, seen even through the mists of slumber, are the ruin and the shame of Italy. Opposite lies Night, so sorrowful, so utterly absorbed in darkness and the shade of death, that to shake off that everlasting lethargy seems impossible. Yet she is not dead. If we raise our voices, she too will stretch her limbs and, like her sister, shudder into sensibility with sighs. Only we must not wake her; for he who fashioned her has told us that her sleep of stone is great good fortune. Both of these women are large and brawny unlike the Fates of Pheidias in their muscular maturity. The burden of Michael Angelo's thought was too tremendous to be borne by virginal or graceful beings. He had to make women no less capable of suffering, no less world-wearied, than his country.

Standing before these statues, we do not cry, How beautiful! We murmur, How terrible, how grand! Yet, after long gazing, we find them gifted with beauty beyond grace. In each of them there is a palpitating thought, torn from the artist's soul and crystallised in marble. It has been said that architecture is petrified music. In the sacristy of S. Lorenzo we feel impelled to remember phrases of Beethoven. Each of these statues becomes for us a passion, fit for musical expression, but turned like Niobe to stone. They have the intellectual vagueness, the emotional certainty, that belong to the motives of a symphony. In their allegories, left without a key, sculpture has passed beyond her old domain of placid concrete form. The anguish of intolerable emotion, the quickening of the consciousness to a sense of suffering, the acceptance of the inevitable, the strife of the soul with destiny, the burden



and the passion of mankind:—that is what they contain in their cold-chisel-tortured marble. It is open to critics of the school of Lessing to object that here is the suicide of sculpture. It is easy to remark that those strained postures and writhen limbs may have perverted the taste of lesser craftsmen. Yet if Michael Angelo was called to carve Medicean statues after the sack of Rome and the fall of Florence—if he was obliged in sober sadness to make sculpture a fit language for his sorrow-laden heart—how could he have wrought more truthfully than thus? To imitate him without sharing his emotions or comprehending his thoughts, as the soulless artist of the decadence attempted, was without any doubt a grievous error. Surely also we may regret, not without reason, that in the evil days upon which he had fallen, the fair antique ‘Heiterkeit’ and ‘Allgemeinheit’ were beyond his reach.

Michael Angelo left the tombs of the Medici unfinished; nor, in spite of Duke Cosimo’s earnest entreaties, would he afterwards return to Florence to complete them. Lorenzo’s features are but rough-hewn; so is the face of Night. Day seems struggling into shape beneath his mask of rock, and Twilight shows everywhere the tooth-dint of the chisel. To leave unfinished was the fate of Michael Angelo—partly too, perhaps, his preference; for he was easily deterred from work. Many of his marbles are only just begun. The two medallion ‘Madonnas,’ the ‘Madonna and Child’ in S. Lorenzo, the ‘Head of Brutus,’ the ‘Bound Captives,’ and the ‘Pietà’ in the Duomo of Florence, are instances of masterpieces in the rough. He loved to fancy that the form dwelt within the stone, and that the chisel disencumbered it of superfluity. Therefore, to his eye, foreseeing what the shape would be when the rude envelope was chipped away, the marble mask may have taken the appearance of a veil or mantle. He may have found some fascination in the incompleteness that argued want of will but not of art, and a rough-hewn Madonna may have been to him what a Dryad still enclosed within a gnarled oak was to a Greek poet’s fancy. We are not, however, justified in therefore assuming, as a recent critic has suggested, that Michael Angelo sought to realise a certain preconceived effect by want of finish. There is enough in the distracted circumstances of his life and in his temper, at once passionate and downcast, to account for fragmentary and imperfect performance; nor must it be forgotten that the manual labour of the sculptor in the sixteenth century was by no means so light as it is now. A decisive argument against this theory is that Buonarroti’s three most celebrated statues—the ‘Pietà’ in S. Peter’s, the ‘Moses’ and the ‘Dawn’—are executed with the highest polish it is possible for stone to take.<sup>36</sup> That he always

<sup>36</sup> The ‘Bacchus’ of the Bargello, the ‘David,’ the ‘Christ,’ of the Minerva, the ‘Duke of Nemours,’ and the almost finished ‘Night,’ might also be mentioned. His chalk drawings of the ‘Bersaglieri,’ the ‘Infant Bacchanals,’ the ‘Fall of Phaëthon,’ and the ‘Punishment of Tityos,’ now in the Royal Collection at Windsor, prove that even in old age Michael Angelo carried delicacy of execution as a draughtsman to a point not surpassed even by Lionardo. Few frescoes, again, were ever finished with more conscientious elaboration than those of the Sistine vault.

aimed at this high finish, but often fell below it through discontent and *ennui* and the importunity of patrons, we have the best reason to believe.

Michael Angelo had now reached his fifty-ninth year. Lionardo and Raphael had already passed away, and were remembered as the giants of a bygone age of gold. Correggio was in his last year. Andrea del Sarto was dead. Nowhere except at Venice did Italian art still flourish; and the mundane style of Titian was not to the sculptor's taste. He had overlived the greatness of his country, and saw Italy in ruins. Yet he was destined to survive another thirty years, another lifetime of Masaccio or Raphael, and to witness still worse days. When we call Michael Angelo the interpreter of the burden and the pain of the Renaissance, we must remember this long weary old age, during which in solitude and silence he watched the extinction of Florence, the institution of the Inquisition, and the abasement of the Italian spirit beneath the tyranny of Spain. His sonnets, written chiefly in this latter period of life, turn often on the thought of death. His love of art yields to religious hope and fear, and he bemoans a youth and manhood spent in vanity. Once when he injured his leg by a fall from the scaffolding in the Sistine Chapel, he refused assistance, shut himself up at home, and lay waiting for deliverance in death. His life was only saved by the forcible interference of friends.

In 1534 a new Eurystheus arose for our Hercules. The Cardinal Alessandro Farnese, a fox by nature and infamous through his indulgence for a vicious bastard, was made Pope under the name of Paul III.<sup>37</sup> Michael Angelo had shed lustre on the reigns of three Popes, his predecessors. For thirty years the Farnese had watched him with greedy eyes. After Julius, Leo, and Clement, the time was now come for the heroic craftsman to serve Paul. The Pope found him at work in his *bottega* on the tomb of Julius; for the 'tragedy of the mausoleum' still dragged on. The statue of Moses was finished. 'That,' said Paul, 'is enough for one Pope. Give me your contract with the Duke of Urbino; I will tear it. Have I waited all these years; and now that I am Pope at last, shall I not have you for myself? I want you in the Sistine Chapel.' Accordingly Michael Angelo, who had already made cartoons for the 'Last Judgment' in the life of Clement, once more laid aside the chisel and took up the brush. For eight years, between 1534 and 1542, he laboured at the fresco above the high altar of the chapel, devoting his terrible genius to a subject worthy of the times in which he lived. Since he had first listened while a youth to the prophecies of Savonarola, the woes announced in that apocalypse had all come true. Italy had been scourged, Rome sacked, the Church chastised. And yet the world had not grown wiser; vice was on the increase, virtue grew more rare.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>37</sup> See Varchi, at the end of the *Storia Fiorentina*, for episodes in the life of Pier Luigi Farnese, and Cellini for a popular estimate of the Cardinal, his father.

<sup>38</sup> This extract from Cesare Balbo's *Pensieri sulla Storia d' Italia*, Le Monnier, 1858, p. 57, may help to explain the situation: 'E se lasciando gli uomini e i nomi grandi de' governanti, noi venissimo a quella storia, troppo sovente negletta, dei piccoli, dei più, dei governati che sono in somma scopo d' ogni sorta di governo; se, coll' aiuto

It was impossible after the experience of the immediate past and within view of the present and the future, to conceive of God as other than an angry judge, vindictive and implacable.

The 'Last Judgment' has long been the most celebrated of Michael Angelo's paintings; partly no doubt because it was executed in the plenitude of his fame, with the eyes of all Italy upon him; partly because its size arouses vulgar wonder, and its theme strikes terror into all who gaze on it. Yet it is neither so strong nor so beautiful as the vault-paintings of the Sistine. The freshness of the genius that created Eve and Adam, unrivalled in their bloom of primal youth, has passed away. Austerity and gloom have taken possession of the painter. His style has hardened into mannerism, and the display of barren science in difficult posturing and strained anatomy has become wilful. Still, whether we regard this fresco as closing the long series of 'Last Judgments' to be studied on Italian church-walls from Giotto downwards; or whether we confine our attention, as contemporaries seem to have done, to the skill of its foreshortenings and groupings;<sup>39</sup> or whether we analyse the dramatic energy wherewith tremendous passions are expressed, its triumph is in either case decided. The whole wall swarms with ascending and descending, poised and hovering, shapes—men and women rising from the grave before the judge, taking their stations among the saved, or sinking with unutterable anguish to the place of doom—a multitude that no man can number, surging to and fro in dim tempestuous air. In the centre at the top, Christ is rising from His throne with the gesture of an angry Hercules, hurling ruin on the guilty. He is such as the sins of Italy have made Him. Squadrons of angels, bearing the emblems of His passion, whirl around Him like grey thunder-clouds, and all the saints lean forward from their vantage ground to curse and threaten. At the very bottom bestial features take the place of human lineaments, and the terror of judgment has become the torment of damnation. Such is the general scope of this picture. Of all its merits, none is greater than the delineation of uncertainty and gradual awakening to life. The middle region between vigilance and slumber, reality and dream, Michael Angelo ruled as his own realm; and a painting of the 'Last Judgment' enabled him to deal with this μεταίχμιος σκότος—this darkness in the interval of crossing spears—under its most solemn aspect.

delle tante memorie rimaste di quell' secolo, noi ci addestrassimo a conoscere la condizione comune e privata degli Italiani di quell' età, noi troveremmo trasmesse dai governanti a' governati, e ritornate da questi a quelli, tali universali scostumatezze ed immoralità, tali fiacchezze e perfidie, tali mollezze e libidini, tali ozi e tali vizi, tali avvillimenti insomma e corruzioni, che sembrano appena credibili in una età d' incivilimento cristiano.'

<sup>39</sup> Vasari's description moves our laughter with its jargon about 'attitudini bellissime e scorti molto mirabili,' when the man, in spite of his honest and enthusiastic admiration, is so little capable of penetrating the painter's thought. Mr. Ruskin leaves the same impression as Vasari: he too makes much talk about attitudes and muscles in Michael Angelo, and seems to be on Vasari's level as to comprehending him. The difference is that Vasari praises, Ruskin blames; both miss the mark.

When the fresco was uncovered, there arose a general murmur of disapprobation that the figures were all nude. As society became more vicious, it grew nice. Messer Biagio, the Pope's master of the ceremonies, remarked that such things were more fit for stews and taverns than a chapel. The angry painter placed his portrait in Hell with a mark of infamy that cast too lurid a light upon this prudish speech. When Biagio complained, Paul wittily answered that, had it been Purgatory, he might have helped him, but in Hell is no redemption. Even the foul-mouthed and foul-hearted Aretino wrote from Venice to the same effect—a letter astounding for its impudence.<sup>40</sup> Michael Angelo made no defence. Perhaps he reflected that the souls of the Pope himself and Messer Biagio and Messer Pietro Aretino would go forth one day naked to appear before the judge, with the deformities of sin upon them, as in Plato's 'Gorgias.' He refused, however, to give clothes to his men and women. Daniel da Volterra, who was afterwards employed to do this, got the name of breeches-maker.

We are hardly able to appreciate the 'Last Judgment,' it has been so smirched and blackened by the smoke and dust of centuries. And this is true of the whole Sistine Chapel.<sup>41</sup> Yet it is here that the genius of Michael Angelo in all its terribleness must still be studied. In order to characterise the impression produced by even the less awful of these frescoes on a sympathetic student, I lay my pen aside and beg the reader to weigh what Henri Beyle, the versatile and brilliant critic, pencilled in the gallery of the Sistine Chapel on January 13, 1807:<sup>42</sup> 'Greek sculpture was unwilling to reproduce the terrible in any shape; the Greeks had enough real troubles of their own. Therefore, in the realm of art, nothing can be compared with the figure of the Eternal drawing forth the first man from nonentity. The pose, the drawing, the drapery, all is striking: the soul is agitated by sensations that are not usually communicated through the eyes. When in our disastrous retreat from Russia, it chanced that we were suddenly awakened in the middle of the dark night by an obstinate cannonading, which at each moment seemed to gain in nearness, then all the forces of a man's nature gathered close around his heart; he felt himself in the presence of fate, and, having no attention left for things of vulgar interest, he made himself ready to dispute his life with destiny. The sight of Michael Angelo's pictures has brought back to my consciousness that almost

<sup>40</sup> 'É possible che voi, che *per essere divino non degnate il consortio degli huomini*, haviate ciò fatto nel maggior tempio di Dio? . . . . In un bagno delizioso, non in un choro supremo si conveniva il far vostro.' Those who are curious may consult Aretino's correspondence with Michael Angelo in his published letters (Parigi, 1609), lib. i. p. 153; lib. ii. p. 9; lib. iii. pp. 45, 122; lib. iv. p. 37.

<sup>41</sup> Braun's autotypes of the vault frescoes show what ravage the lapse of time has wrought in them, by the cracking of the plaster, the peeling off in places of the upper surface, and the deposit of dirt and cobwebs. Mr. Heath Wilson, after careful examination, pronounces that not only time, but the wilful hand of man, re-painting and washing the delicate tint-coats with corrosive acids, has contributed to their ruin.

<sup>42</sup> *Histoire de la Peinture en Italie*, p. 332.

forgotten sensation. Great souls enjoy their own greatness: the rest of the world is seized with fear, and goes mad.'

After the painting of the 'Last Judgment,' one more great labour was reserved for Michael Angelo.<sup>43</sup> By a brief of September, 1535, Paul III. had made him the chief architect as well as sculptor and painter of the Holy See. He was now called upon to superintend the building of S. Peter's, and to this task, undertaken for the repose of his soul without emolument, he devoted the last years of his life. The dome of S. Peter's, as seen from Tivoli or the Alban hills, like a cloud upon the Campagna, is Buonarroti's; but he has no share in the façade that screens it from the piazza. It lies beyond the scope of this chapter to relate once more the history of the vicissitudes through which S. Peter's went between the days of Alberti and Bernini.<sup>44</sup> I can but refer to Michael Angelo's letter addressed to Bartolommeo Ammanati, valuable both as setting forth his views about the structure, and as rendering the fullest and most glorious meed of praise to his old enemy Bramante.<sup>45</sup> All ancient jealousies, even had they ever stirred the heart of Michael Angelo, had long been set at rest by time and death. The one wish of his soul was to set a worthy diadem upon the mother-church of Christianity, repairing by the majesty of art what Rome had suffered at the hands of Germany and Spain, and inaugurating by this visible sign of sovereignty the new age of Catholicity renescent and triumphant.

To the last period of Buonarroti's life (a space of twenty-two years between 1542 and 1564) we owe some of his most beautiful drawings—sketches for pictures of the Crucifixion made for Vittoria Colonna, and a few mythological designs, like the 'Rape of Ganymede,' composed for Tommaso Cavalieri. His thoughts meanwhile were turned more and more, as time advanced, to piety; and many of his sonnets breathe an almost ascetic spirit of religion.<sup>46</sup> We see in them the old man regretting the years he had spent on art, deploring his enthusiasm for earthly beauty, and seeking comfort in the cross alone.

Painting nor sculpture now can lull to rest  
My soul, that turns to His great love on high,  
Whose arms to clasp us on the cross were spread.

It is pleasant to know that these last years were also the happiest and calmest. Though he had lost his faithful friend and servant Urbino; though his father had died, an old man, and his brothers had passed away before him one by one, his nephew Lionardo had married in Florence, and begotten a son called Michael Angelo. Thus he had the satisfaction of hoping that his name would endure and flourish, as in-

<sup>43</sup> That is not counting the frescoes of the Cappella Paolina in the Vatican, painted about 1544, which are now in a far worse state even than the 'Last Judgment,' and which can never have done more than show his style in decadence.

<sup>44</sup> See above, pp. 629-630.

<sup>45</sup> See Gotti, p. 307, or *Archivio Buonarroti*, p. 535.

<sup>46</sup> I have reserved my translation of the sonnets that cast most light upon Michael Angelo's thought and feeling for an Appendix, No. II.

deed it has done almost to this very day in Florence. What consolation this thought must have brought him, is clear to those who have studied his correspondence and observed the tender care and continual anxiety he had for his kinsmen.<sup>47</sup> Wealth now belonged to him: but he had never cared for money; and he continued to live like a poor man, dressing soberly and eating sparsely, often taking but one meal in the day, and that of bread and wine.<sup>48</sup> He slept little, and rose by night to work upon his statues, wearing a cap with a candle stuck in front of it, that he might see where to drive the chisel home. During his whole life he had been solitary, partly by preference, partly by devotion to his art, and partly because he kept men at a distance by his manner.<sup>49</sup> Not that Michael Angelo was sour or haughty; but he spoke his mind out very plainly, had no tolerance for fools, and was apt to fly into passions.<sup>50</sup> Time had now softened his temper and removed all causes of discouragement. He had survived every rival, and the world was convinced of his supremacy. Princes courted him; the Count of Canossa was proud to claim him for a kinsman; strangers, when they visited Rome, were eager to behold in him its greatest living wonder.<sup>51</sup> His old age was the serene and splendid evening of a toilsome day. But better than all this, he now enjoyed both love and friendship.

If Michael Angelo could ever have been handsome is more than doubtful. Early in his youth the quarrelsome and vain Torrigiani

<sup>47</sup> The majority of Michael Angelo's letters are written on domestic matters—about the affairs of his brothers and his father. When they vexed him, he would break out into expressions like the following: 'Io son ito, da dodici anni in qua, tapinando per tutta Italia; sopportato ogni vergogna; patito ogni stento; lacerato il corpo mio in ogni fatica; messa la vita propria a mille pericoli, solo per aiutar la casa mia.' They are generally full of good counsel and sound love. How he loved his father may be seen in the *terza rima* poem on his death in 1534.

<sup>48</sup> Notice this expression in a letter to his father, written from Rome, about 1512, 'Bastivi avere del pane, e vivete ben con Cristo e poveramente; come fo io qua, che vivo meschinamente.' It does not seem that he ever altered this poor way of living. For his hiring at Bologna, in 1507, a single room with one bed in it, for himself and his three workmen, see Gotti, p. 58. His father in 1500 rebuked him for the meanness of his establishment; *ibid.* p. 23. It appears that he was always sending money home.

<sup>49</sup> 'Io sto qua in grande affanno, e con grandissima fatica di corpo, e non ò amici di nessuna sorte, e non voglio: e non ò tanto tempo che io possa mangiare el bisogno mio.' Letter to Gismondo, published by Grimm. See, too, Sebastian del Piombo's letter to him of November 9, 1520: 'Ma fate paura a ognuno, insino a' papi.' Compare, too, the letter of Sebastian, Oct. 15, 1512, in which Julius is reported to have said, 'È terribile, come tu vedi, non se pol praticar con lui.' Again, Michael Angelo writes: 'Sto sempesolo, vo poco attorno e non parlo a persona e massino di fiorentini.' Gotti, p. 255.

<sup>50</sup> When anything went wrong with him, he became moody and vehement: 'Non vi maravigliate che io vi abbi scritto alle volte così stizosamente, che io ò alle volte di gran passione, per molte cagioni che avvengono a chi è fuor di casa.' So he writes to his father in 1498. A letter to Luigi del Riccio of 1545, is signed 'Michelagnolo Buonarroto non pittore, nè scultore, nè architetto, ma quel che voi volete, ma none briaco, come vi dissi, in casa.'

<sup>51</sup> See the letters of Cosimo de' Medici, Gotti, pp. 301-313, the letter of Count Alessandro da Canossa, *ibid.* p. 4, and Pier Vettori's letter to Borghini, about the visit of some German gentlemen, *ibid.* p. 315.

broke his nose with a blow of the fist, when they were drawing from Masaccio's frescoes in the Carmine together.<sup>52</sup> Thenceforth the artist's soul looked forth from a sad face, with small grey eyes, flat nostrils, and rugged weight of jutting brows. Good care was thus taken that light love should not trifle with the man who was destined to be the prophet of his age in art. Like Beethoven, he united a loving nature, sensitive to beauty and desirous of affection, with a rude exterior. He seemed incapable of attaching himself to any merely mortal object, and wedded the ideal. In that century of intrigue and armour, we hear of nothing to imply that Michael Angelo was a lover till he reached the age of sixty. How he may have loved in the earlier periods of his life, whereof no record now remains, can only be guessed from the tenderness and passion outpoured in the poems of his latter years. That his morality was pure and his converse without stain, is emphatically witnessed by both Vasari and Condivi.<sup>53</sup> But that his emotion was intense, and that to beauty in all its human forms he was throughout his life a slave, we have his own sonnets to prove.

In the year 1534 he first became acquainted with the noble lady Vittoria, daughter of Fabrizio Colonna, and widow of the Marquis of Pescara. She was then aged forty-four, and had nine years survived the loss of a husband she never ceased to idolise.<sup>54</sup> Living in retirement in Rome, she employed her leisure with philosophy and poetry. Artists and men of letters were admitted to her society. Among the subjects she had most at heart was the reform of the Church and the restoration of religion to its evangelical purity. Between her and Michael Angelo a tender affection sprang up based upon the sympathy of ardent and high-seeking natures. If love be the right name for this exalted and yet fervid attachment, Michael Angelo may be said to have loved her with all the pent-up forces of his heart. None of his works displays a predilection for girlish beauty, and it is probable that her intellectual distinction and mature womanhood touched him even more than if she had been younger. When they were together in Rome they met frequently for conversation on the themes of art and piety they both held dear. Of these discourses a charming record has been preserved to us by the painter Francis of Holland.<sup>55</sup> When they were separated they exchanged poems and wrote letters, some of which remain. On the death of Vittoria, in 1547, the light of life seemed to be extinguished for our sculptor. It is said that he waited by her bed-side,

<sup>52</sup> See the story as told by Torrigiani himself in Cellini, ed. Le Monnier, p. 23.

<sup>53</sup> After saying that he talked of love like Plato, Condivi continues: 'Non senti mai uscir di quella bocca se non parole onestissime, e che avevan forza d' estinguere nella gioventù ogni incompsto e sfrenato desiderio che in lei potesse cadere.' Compare Scipione Ammirato, quoted by Guasti, 'Le Rime,' p. xi.

<sup>54</sup> Her intense affection for the Marquis of Pescara, to whom she had been betrothed by her father at the age of five, is sufficiently proved by those many sonnets and *canzoni* in which she speaks of him as her Sun.

<sup>55</sup> See Grimm, vol. ii.



and kissed her hand when she was dying. The sonnets he afterwards composed show that his soul followed her to heaven.

Another friend whom Michael Angelo found in this last stage of life, and whom he loved with only less warmth than Vittoria, was a young Roman of perfect beauty and of winning manners. Tommaso Cavalieri must be mentioned next to the Marchioness of Pescara as the being who bound this greatest soul a captive.<sup>56</sup> Both Cavalieri and Vittoria are said to have been painted by him, and these are the only two portraits he is reported to have executed. It may here be remarked that nothing is more characteristic of his genius than the determination to see through nature, to pass beyond the actual to the abstract, and to use reality only as a stepping-stone to the ideal. This artistic Platonism was the source both of his greatness and his mannerism. As men choose to follow Blake or Ruskin, they may praise or blame him; yet blame and praise pronounced on such a matter with regard to such a man are equally impertinent and insignificant. It is enough for the critic to note with reverence that thus and thus the spirit that was in him worked and moved.

When we read the sonnets addressed to Vittoria Colonna and Cavalieri, we find something inexpressibly pathetic in this pure and fervent worship of beauty, when the artist with a soul still young had reached the limit of the years of man. Here and there we trace in them an echo of his youth. The Platonic dialogues he heard while yet a young man at the suppers of Lorenzo, reappear converted to the very substance of his thought and style. At the same time Savonarola resumes ascendancy over his mind; and when he turns to Florence, it is of Dante that he speaks.

At last the moment came when this strong solitary spirit, much suffering and much loving, had to render its account. It appears from a letter written to Lionardo Buonarroti on February 15, 1564, that his old servant Antonio del Francese, the successor of Urbino in his household, together with Tommaso Cavalieri and Daniello Ricciarelli of Volterra, attended him in his last illness. On the 18th of that month, having bequeathed his soul to God, his body to the earth, and his worldly goods to his kinsfolk, praying them on their deathbed to think upon Christ's passion, he breathed his last. His corpse was transported to Florence, and buried in the church of S. Croce, with great pomp and honour, by the Duke, the city, and the Florentine Academy.

<sup>56</sup> See the Sonnets translated in my Appendix and in my *Sonnets of Michael Angelo and Campanella*, London, Smith & Elder, 1878. See also the letters to Cavalieri, quoted by Gotti, pp. 231, 232, 234. It is surely strained criticism to conjecture, as Gotti has done, that these epistles were meant for Vittoria, though written to Cavalieri. Taken together with the sonnets and the letter of Bartolommeo Angiolini (Gotti, p. 233), they seem to me to prove only Michael Angelo's warm love for this young man.

## CHAPTER IX

### LIFE OF BENVENUTO CELLINI

*His Fame—His Autobiography—Its Value for the Student of History, Manners, and Character, in the Renaissance—Birth, Parentage, and Boyhood—Flute-playing—Apprenticeship to Marcone—Wanderjahr—The Goldsmith's Trade at Florence—Torrighiani and England—Cellini leaves Florence for Rome—Quarrel with the Guasconti—Homicidal Fury—Cellini a Law to Himself—Three Periods in his Manhood—Life in Rome—Diego at the Banquet—Renaissance Feeling for Physical Beauty—Sack of Rome—Miracles in Cellini's Life—His Affections—Murder of his Brother's Assassin—Sanctuary—Pardon and Absolution—Incantation in the Colosseum—First Visit to France—Adventures on the Way—Accused of Stealing Crown Jewels in Rome—Imprisonment in the Castle of S. Angelo—The Governor—Cellini's Escape—His Visions—The Nature of his Religion—Second Visit to France—The Wandering Court—Le Petit Nesle—Cellini in the French Law Courts—Scene at Fontainebleau—Return to Florence—Cosimo de' Medici as a Patron—Intrigues of a petty Court—Bandinelli—The Duchess—Statue of Perseus—End of Cellini's Life—Cellini and Michiavelli.*

FEW names in the history of Italian art are more renowned than that of Benvenuto Cellini. This can hardly be attributed to the value of his extant works; for though, while he lived, he was the greatest goldsmith of his time, a skilled medallist and an admirable statuary, few of his many masterpieces now survive. The plate and armour that bear his name, are only in some rare instances genuine; and the bronze 'Perseus' in the Loggia de' Lanzi at Florence remains almost alone to show how high he ranked among the later Tuscan sculptors. If, therefore, Cellini had been judged merely by the authentic productions of his art, he would not have acquired a celebrity unique among his fellow-workers of the sixteenth century. That fame he owes to the circumstance that he left behind him at his death a full and graphic narrative of his stormy life. The vivid style of this autobiography dictated by Cellini while still engaged in the labour of his craft, its animated picture of a powerful character, the variety of its incidents, and the amount of information it contains, place it high both as a life-romance and also as a record of contemporary history. After studying the laboured periods of Varchi, we turn to these memoirs, and view the same events from the standpoint of an artisan conveying his impressions with plebeian raciness of phrase. The sack of Rome, the plague and siege of Florence, the humiliation of Clement VII., the pomp of Charles V. at Rome, the behaviour of the Florentine exiles at Ferrara, the intimacy between Alessandro de' Medici and his murderer, Lorenzino, the policy of Paul III., and the method pursued by Cosimo at Florence, are briefly but

significantly touched upon—no longer by the historian seeking causes and setting forth the sequence of events, but by a shrewd observer interested in depicting his own part in the great game of life. Cellini haunted the private rooms of popes and princes; he knew the chief actors of his day, just as the valet knows the hero; and the picturesque glimpses into their life we gain from him, add the charm of colour and reality to history.

At the same time this book presents an admirable picture of an artist's life at Rome, Paris, and Florence. Cellini was essentially an Italian of the Cinque-cento. His passions were the passions of his countrymen; his vices were the vices of his time; his eccentricity and energy and vital force were what the age idealised as *virtù*. Combining rare artistic gifts with a most violent temper and a most obstinate will, he paints himself at one time as a conscientious craftsman, at another as a desperate bravo. He obeys his instincts and indulges his appetites with the irreflective simplicity of an animal. In the pursuit of vengeance and the commission of murder he is self-reliant, coolly calculating, fierce and fatal as a tiger. Yet his religious fervour is sincere; his impulses are generous; and his heart on the whole is good. His vanity is inordinate; and his unmistakable courage is impaired, to Northern apprehension, by swaggering bravado.

The mixture of these qualities in a personality so natural and so clearly limned renders Cellini a most precious subject for the student of Renaissance life and character. Even supposing him to have been exceptionally passionate, he was made of the same stuff as his contemporaries. We are justified in concluding this not only from collateral evidence and from what he tells us, but also from the meed of honour he received. In Europe of the present day he could hardly fail to be regarded as a ruffian, a dangerous disturber of morality and order. In his own age he was held in high esteem and buried by his fellow-citizens with public ceremonies. A funeral oration was pronounced over his grave 'in praise both of his life and works, and also of his excellent disposition of mind and body.'<sup>1</sup> He dictated the memoirs that paint him as bloodthirsty, sensual, and revengeful, in the leisure of his old age, and left them with complacency to serve as witness of his manly virtues to posterity. Even Vasari, whom he hated, and who reciprocated his ill-will, records that 'he always showed himself a man of great spirit and veracity, bold, active, enterprising, and formidable to his enemies; a man, in short, who knew as well how to speak to princes as to exert himself in his art.'

Enough has been said to prove that Cellini was not inferior to the average morality of the Renaissance, and that we are justified in accepting his life as a valuable historical document.<sup>2</sup> To give a detailed

<sup>1</sup> 'In lode e onor della vita sua e opere d' esso, e buona disposizione della anima e del corpo.' *La Vita di Benvenuto Cellini*, Firenze, Le Monnier, 1852; *Documenti*, p. 578.

<sup>2</sup> I do not by this mean to commit myself to the opinion that Cellini is accurate in details or truthful. On the contrary, it is impossible to read his life without feeling that his vanity and self-esteem led him to exaggeration and mis-statement. The

account of a book pronounced by Horace Walpole 'more amusing than any novel,' received by Parini and Tiraboschi as the most delightful masterpiece of Italian prose, translated into German by Goethe, and placed upon his index of select works by Auguste Comte, may seem superfluous. Yet I cannot afford to omit from my plan the most singular and characteristic episode in the private history of the Italian Renaissance. I need it for the concrete illustration of much that has been said in this and the preceding volumes of my work.

Cellini was born of respectable parents at Florence on the night of All Saints' Day in 1500, and was called Benvenuto to record his father's joy at having a son.<sup>3</sup> It was the wish of Giovanni Cellini's heart that his son should be a musician. Benvenuto in consequence practised the flute for many years attentively, though much against his will. At the age of fifteen so great was his desire to learn the arts of design that his father placed him under the care of the goldsmith Marcone. At the same time he tells us in his memoirs: 'I continued to play sometimes through complaisance to my father either upon the flute or the horn; and I constantly drew tears and deep sighs from him every time he heard me.' While engaged in the workshop of Marcone, Benvenuto came to blows with some young men who had attacked his brother, and was obliged to leave Florence for a time. At this period he visited Siena, Bologna, and Pisa, gaining his livelihood by working in the shops of goldsmiths, and steadily advancing in his art.

It must not be thought that this education was a mean one for so great an artist. Painting and sculpture in Italy were regarded as trades, and the artist had his *bottega* just as much as the cobbler or the blacksmith.<sup>4</sup> I have already had occasion to point out that an apprenticeship to goldsmith's work was considered at Florence an almost indispensable commencement of advanced art-study.<sup>5</sup> Brunelleschi, Botticelli, Orcagna, Verocchio, Ghiberti, Pollajuolo, Ghirlandajo, Luca della Robbia, all underwent this training before they applied themselves to architecture, painting, and sculpture. As the goldsmith's craft was understood in Florence, it exacted the most exquisite nicety in perform-

value of the biography consists in its picturesqueness, its brilliant and faithful colouring, and its unconscious self-revelation of an energetic character.

<sup>3</sup> With regard to his pedigree Cellini tells a ridiculous story about a certain Fiorino da Cellino, one of Julius Caesar's captains, who gave his name to Florence. For the arms of the Cellini family, see lib. i. cap. 50.

<sup>4</sup> To enlarge upon this point is hardly necessary; or it would be easy to prove from documentary evidence that artists so eminent as Simone Martini, Gentile da Fabriano, Perugino, and Ghirlandajo kept open shops, where customers could buy the products of their craft from a highly-finished altar-piece down to a painted buckler or a sign to hang above the street-door. The commercial status of fine art in Italy was highly beneficial to its advancement, inasmuch as it implied a thorough technical apprenticeship for learners. The defective side of the system was apparent in great workshops like that of Raphael, who undertook painting-commissions quite beyond his powers of conscientious execution.

<sup>5</sup> See above, p. 645.

ance as well as design. It forced the student to familiarise himself with the materials, instruments, and technical processes of art; so that, later on in life, he was not tempted to leave the execution of his work to journeymen and hirelings.<sup>6</sup> No labour seemed too minute, no metal was too mean, for the exercise of the master-workman's skill; nor did he run the risk of becoming one of those half-amateurs in whom accomplishment falls short of first conception. Art ennobled for him all that he was called to do. Whether cardinals required him to fashion silver vases for their banquet-tables; or ladies wished the setting of their jewels altered; or a pope wanted the enamelled binding of a book of prayers; or men-at-arms sent swordblades to be damascened with acanthus foliage; or kings desired fountains and statues for their palace courts; or poets begged to have their portraits cast in bronze; or generals needed medals to commemorate their victories, or dukes new coins for their mint; or bishops ordered reliquaries for the altars of their patron saints; or merchants sought for seals and signet rings engraved with their device; or men of fashion asked for medallions of Leda and Adonis to fasten in their caps—all these commissions could be undertaken by a workman like Cellini. He was prepared for all alike by his apprenticeship to *orefexia*; and to all he gave the same amount of conscientious toil. The consequence was that, at the time of the Renaissance, furniture, plate, jewels, and articles of personal adornment were objects of true art. The mind of the craftsman was exercised afresh in every piece of work. Pretty things were not bought, machine-made, by the gross in a warehouse; nor was it customary, as now it is, to see the same design repeated with mechanical regularity in every house.

In 1518 Benvenuto returned to Florence and began to study the cartoons of Michael Angelo. He must have already acquired considerable reputation as a workman, for about this time Torrigiani invited him to go to England in his company and enter the service of Henry VIII. The Renaissance was now beginning to penetrate the nations of the North, and Henry and Francis vied with each other in trying to attract foreign artists to their capitals. It does not, however, appear that the English king secured the services of men so distinguished as Lionardo da Vinci, Il Rosso, Primaticcio, Del Sarto, and Cellini, who shed an artificial lustre on the Court of France. Going to London then was worse than going to Russia now, and to take up a lengthy residence among *questi diavoli . . . quelle bestie di quegli Inglesi*, as Cellini politely calls the English, did not suit a Southern taste. He had, moreover, private reasons for disliking Torrigiani, who boasted of having broken Michael Angelo's nose in a quarrel. 'His words,' says Cellini, 'raised in me such a hatred of the fellow that, far from wishing to accompany him to England, I could not bear to look at him.' It may

<sup>6</sup> See lib. ii. cap. 5, for the description of Francis I. visiting Cellini in his work-room. He finds him hammering away at the metal, and suggests that he might leave that labour to his prentices. Cellini replies that the excellence of his work would suffer if he did not do it himself.

be mentioned that one of Cellini's best points was hero-worship for Michael Angelo. He never speaks of him except as *quel divino Michel Agnolo, il mio maestro*, and extols *la bella maniera* of the mighty sculptor to the skies. Torrigiani, as far as we can gather from Cellini's description of him, must have been a man of his own kidney and complexion: 'he was handsome, of consummate assurance, having rather the airs of a bravo than a sculptor; above all, his fierce gestures and his sonorous voice, with a peculiar manner of knitting his brows, were enough to frighten everyone that saw him; and he was continually talking of his valiant feats among those bears of Englishmen.' The story of Torrigiani's death in Spain is worth repeating. A grandee employed him to model a Madonna, which he did with more than usual care, expecting a great reward. His pay, however, falling short of his expectation, in a fit of fury he knocked his statue to pieces. For this act of sacrilege, as it was deemed, to the work of his own brain and hand, Torrigiani was thrown into the dungeons of the Inquisition. There he starved himself to death in 1522 in order to escape the fate of being burned. This story helps to explain why the fine arts were never well developed in Spain, and why they languished after the introduction of the Holy Office into Italy.<sup>7</sup>

Instead of emigrating to England, Benvenuto, after a quarrel with his father about the obnoxious flute-playing, sauntered out one morning toward the gate of S. Piero Gattolini. There he met a friend called Tasso, who had also quarrelled with his parents; and the two youths agreed, upon the moment, to set off for Rome. Both were nineteen years of age. Singing and laughing, carrying their bundle by turns, and wondering 'what the old folks would say,' they trudged on foot to Siena, there hired a return horse between them, and so came to Rome. This residence in Rome only lasted two years, which were spent by Cellini in the employment of various masters. At the expiration of that time he returned to Florence, and distinguished himself by the making of a marriage girdle for a certain Raffaello Lapaccini.<sup>8</sup> The fame of this and other pieces of jewellery roused against him the envy and malice of the elder goldsmiths, and led to a serious fray, in the course of which he assaulted a young man of the Guasconti family, and was obliged to fly disguised like a monk to Rome.

As this is the first of Cellini's homicidal quarrels, it is worth while to transcribe what he says about it. 'One day as I was leaning against the shop of these Guasconti, and talking with them, they contrived that a load of bricks should pass by at the moment, and Gherardo Guasconti pushed it against me in such wise that it hurt me. Turning suddenly and seeing that he was laughing, I struck him so hard upon the temple that he fell down stunned. Then turning to his cousins, I

<sup>7</sup> See Yriarte, *Vie d'un Gentilhomme de Venise*, p. 439, for a process instituted by the Inquisition against Paolo Veronese.

<sup>8</sup> He calls it 'un chiavaquore di argento, il quale era in quei tempi chiamato così. Questo si era una cintura di tre dita larga, che alle spose novelle s' usava di fare.'

said, That is how I treat cowardly thieves like you; and when they began to show fight, being many together, I, finding myself on flame, set hand to a little knife I had, and cried, If one of you leaves the shop, let another run for the confessor, for a surgeon won't find anything to do here.' Nor was he contented with this truculent behaviour; for when Gherardo recovered from his blow, and the matter had come before the magistrates, Cellini went to seek him in his own house. There he stabbed him in the midst of all his family, raging meanwhile, to use his own phrase, 'like an infuriated bull.'<sup>9</sup> It appears that on this occasion no one was seriously hurt; but the affair proved perilous to Cellini, since it was a mere accident that he had not killed more than one of the Guasconti. These affrays recur continually among the adventures recorded by Cellini in his Life. He says with comical reservation of phrase that he was 'naturally somewhat choleric,' and then describes the access of his fury as a sort of fever, lasting for days, preventing him from taking food or sleep, making his blood boil in his veins, inflaming his eyes, and never suffering him to rest till he revenged himself by murder or at least by blows. To enumerate all the people he killed or wounded, or pounded to a jelly in public brawls or private quarrels, in the pursuit of deliberate *vendetta* or under a sudden impulse of ungovernable rage, would take too long. We are forced by an effort to recall to mind the state of society at that time in Italy, in order to understand how it is that he can talk with unconcern and even self-complacency about his homicides. He makes himself accuser, judge, and executioner, and is quite satisfied with the goodness of his cause, the justice of his sentence, and the equity of his administration. In a sonnet written to Bandinelli, he compares his own victims with the mangled statues of that sculptor, much to his own satisfaction.<sup>10</sup>

There is the same callousness of conscience in his record of spiteful acts that we should blush to think of—stabs in the dark, and such a piece of revenge as cutting the beds to bits in the house of an innkeeper who had offended him.<sup>11</sup> Nor does he speak with any shame of the savage cruelty with which he punished a woman who was sitting to him as a model, and whom he hauled up and down his room by the hair of her head, kicking and beating her till he was tired.<sup>12</sup> It is true that on this occasion he regrets having spoiled, in a moment of blind passion, the best arms and legs that he could find to draw from. Such episodes, to which it is impossible to allude otherwise than very briefly, illustrate with extraordinary vividness what I have already had occasion to say about the Italian sense of honour at this period.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> 'Si come un toro invelenito.'

<sup>10</sup> 'Living men have felt my blows: those many maimed and mutilated stones one sees, attest to your disgrace: the earth hides my bad work.' See the lines quoted by Perkins, *Tuscan Sculptors*, vol. ii. p. 140.

<sup>11</sup> Lib. i. cap. 79.

<sup>12</sup> Lib. ii. cap. 34. The whole history of this woman Caterina, and of the revenge he took upon her and his prentice Paolo, is one of the most extraordinary passages in the life.

<sup>13</sup> See *Age of the Despots*, pp. 242-244.



The consciousness of physical courage and the belief in his own moral superiority sustained Cellini in all his dangers and in all his crimes. Armed with his sword and dagger, and protected by his coat of mail, he was ready to stand against the world and fight his way towards any object he desired. When a man opposed his schemes or entered into competition with him as an artist, he swaggered up with hand on hilt and threatened to run him through the body if he did not mind his business. At the same time he attributes the success of his own violence in quelling and maltreating his opponents to the providence of God. 'I do not write this narrative,' he says, 'from a motive of vanity, but merely to return thanks to God, who has extricated me out of so many trials and difficulties; who likewise delivers me from those that daily impend over me. Upon all occasions I pay my devotions to Him, call upon Him as my defender, and recommend myself to His care. I always exert my utmost efforts to extricate myself, but when I am quite at a loss, and all my powers fail me, then the force of the Deity displays itself—that formidable force which, unexpectedly, strikes those who wrong and oppress others, and neglect the great and honourable duty which God has enjoined on them.' I shall have occasion later on to discuss Cellini's religious opinions; but here it may be remarked that the feeling of this passage is thoroughly sincere and consistent with the spirit of the times. The separation between religion and morality was complete in Italy.<sup>14</sup> Men made their own God and worshipped him; and the God of Cellini was one who always helped those who began to help themselves by taking justice into their own hands.

From the date of his second visit to Rome in 1523, Cellini's life divides itself into three periods, the first spent in the service of Popes Clement VII. and Paul III., the second in Paris at the Court of Francis, and the third at Florence under Cosimo de' Medici.

On arriving in Rome, his extraordinary abilities soon brought him into notice at the Court. The Chigi family, the Bishop of Salamanca, and the Pope himself employed him to make various jewels, ornaments, and services of plate. In consequence of a dream in which his father appeared and warned him not to neglect music, under pain of the paternal malediction, he accepted a post in the Papal band. The old bugbear of flute-playing followed him until his father's death, and then we hear no more of it. The history of this portion of his life is among the most entertaining passages of his biography. Drawing the Roman ruins, shooting pigeons, scouring the Campagna on a pony like a shaggy bear, fighting duels, prosecuting love-affairs, defending his shop against robbers, skirmishing with Moorish pirates on the shore by Cerveterra, stabbing, falling ill of the plague and the French sickness—these adventures diversify the account he gives of masterpieces in gold and silver ware. The literary and artistic society of Rome at this period was very brilliant. Painters, sculptors, and goldsmiths mixed with scholars and poets, passing their time alternately in the palaces of

<sup>14</sup> See *Age of the Despots*, pp. 232-233.

dukes and cardinals and in the lodgings of gay women. Bohemianism of the wildest type was combined with the manners of the great world. A little incident described at some length by Cellini brings this varied life before us. There was a club of artists, including Giulio Romano and other pupils of Raphael, who met twice a week to sup together and to spend the evening in conversation, with music and the recitation of sonnets. Each member of this company brought with him a lady. Cellini, on one occasion, not being provided for the moment with an *innamorata*, dressed up a beautiful Spanish youth called Diego as a woman, and took him to the supper. The ensuing scene is described in the most vivid manner. We see before us the band of painters and poets, the women in their bright costumes, the table adorned with flowers and fruit, and, as a background to the whole picture, a trellis of jasmines with dark foliage and starry blossoms. Diego, called Pomona, with regard doubtless to his dark and ruddy beauty, is unanimously proclaimed the fairest of the fair. Then a discovery of his sex is made; and the adventure leads, as usual in the doings of Cellini, to daggers, midnight ambushes, and vendettas that only end with bloodshed.

An episode of this sort may serve as the occasion for observing that the artists of the late Renaissance had become absorbed in the admiration of merely carnal beauty. With the exception of Michael Angelo and Tintoretto, there was no great master left who still pursued an intellectual ideal. The Romans and the Venetians simply sought and painted what was splendid and luxurious in the world around them. Their taste was contented with well-developed muscles, gorgeous colour, youthful bloom, activity of limb, and grace of outline. The habits of the day, voluptuous yet hardy, fostered this one-sided development of the arts; while the asceticism of the Middle Ages had yielded to a pagan cult of sensuality. To draw *un bel corpo ignudo* with freedom was now the *ne plus ultra* of achievement. How to express thought or to indicate the subtleties of emotion, had ceased to be the artist's aim. We have already noticed the passionate love of beauty which animated the great masters of the golden age. This, in the less elevated natures of the craftsmen who succeeded them, and under the conditions of advancing national corruption, was no longer refined or restrained by delicacy of feeling or by loftiness of aim. It degenerated into soulless animalism. The capacity for perceiving and for reproducing what is nobly beautiful was lost. Vulgarity and coarseness stamped themselves upon the finest work of men like Giulio Romano. At this crisis it was proved how inferior was the neo-paganism of the sixteenth century to the paganism of antiquity it aped. Mythology preserved Greek art from degradation, and connected a similar enthusiasm for corporeal beauty with the thoughts and aspirations of the Hellenic race. The Italians lacked this safeguard of a natural religion. To throw the Christian ideal aside, and to strive to grasp the classical ideal in exchange, was easy. But paganism alone could give them nothing but its vices; it was incapable of communicating its real source of life—its

poetry, its faith, its cult of nature. Art, therefore, as soon as the artists pronounced themselves for sensuality, merged in a skilful selection and reproduction of elegant forms, and nothing more. A handsome youth upon a pedestal was called a god. A duke's mistress on Titian's canvas passed for Aphrodite. Andrea del Sarto's faithless wife figured as Madonna. Cellini himself, though sensitive to every kind of physical beauty—as we gather from what he tells us of Cencio, Diego, Faustina, Paulino, Angelica, Ascanio—has not attempted to animate his 'Perseus,' or his 'Ganymede,' or his 'Diana of Fontainebleau,' with a vestige of intellectual or moral loveliness. The vacancy of their expression proves the degradation of an art that had ceased to idealise anything beyond a faultless body. Not thus did the Greeks imagine even their most sensual divinities. There is at least a thought in Faun and Satyr. Cellini's statues have no thought; their blank animalism corresponds to the condition of their maker's soul.<sup>15</sup>

When Rome was carried by assault in 1527, and the Papal Court was besieged in the castle of S. Angelo, Cellini played the part of bombardier. It is well known that he claims to have shot the Constable of Bourbon dead with his own hand, and to have wounded the Prince of Orange; nor does there seem to be any adequate reason for discrediting his narrative. It is certain that he was an expert marksman, and that he did Clement good service by directing the artillery of S. Angelo. If we believed all his assertions, however, we should have to suppose that nothing memorable happened without his intervention. In his own eyes his whole life was a miracle. The very hailstones that fell upon his head could not be grasped in both hands. His guns and powder brought down birds no other marksman had a chance of hitting. When he was a child, he grasped a scorpion without injury, and saw a salamander 'living and enjoying himself in the hottest flames.' After his fever at Rome in 1535, he threw off from his stomach a hideous worm—hairy, speckled with green, black, and red—the like whereof the doctors never saw.<sup>16</sup> When he finally escaped from the dungeons of S. Angelo in 1539, a luminous appearance like an aureole settled on his head, and stayed there for the rest of his life.<sup>17</sup> These facts are related in the true spirit of Jerome Cardan, Paracelsus, Lord Herbert of Cherbury, and Sir Thomas Browne. Cellini doubtless believed in them; but they warn us to be cautious in accepting what he says about his exploits, since imagination and self-conceit could so far distort his judgment.

It may be regretted that Cellini has not given a fuller account of the memorable sack of Rome. Yet, confining himself almost wholly to his own adventures, he presents a very vivid picture of the sad life led by the Pope and cardinals, vainly hoping for succour from Urbino,

<sup>15</sup> This might be further illustrated by analysing Cellini's mode of loving. He never rises above animal appetite.

<sup>16</sup> Lib. i. cap. 85. 'Nel qual vomito mi uscì dello stomaco un verme piloso, grande un quarto di braccio: e' peli erano grandi ed il verme era bruttissimo, macchiato di diversi colori, verdi, neri e rossi.'

<sup>17</sup> Lib. i. cap. 128.

wrangling together about the causes of the tragedy, sewing the crown jewels into their doublets, and running the perils of the siege with common soldiers on the ramparts. When peace at last was signed, Cellini paid a visit to Florence, and found that his father and some other relatives had died of plague.<sup>18</sup> His brother Cecchino, however, who was a soldier in the Bande Nere of Giovanni de' Medici, and his sister Liperata survived. With them he spent a pleasant evening; for Liperata having 'for a while lamented her father, her sister, her husband, and a little son that she had been deprived of, went to prepare supper, and during the rest of the evening there was not a word more spoken of the dead, but much about weddings. Thus we supped together with the greatest cheerfulness and satisfaction imaginable.' In these sentences there is no avowal of hard-heartedness; only the careless familiarity with loss and danger, engendered by war, famine, plague, and personal adventures in those riotous times.<sup>19</sup> Cellini gladly risked his life in a quarrel for his friends; but he would not sadden the present by reflecting on inevitable accidents. This elastic temper permeates his character. His affections were strong, but transient. The one serious love-affair he describes, among a multitude of mere debaucheries, made him miserable for a few days. His mistress, Angelica, ran away, and left him 'on the point of losing his senses or dying of grief.' Yet, when he found her again, a short time sufficed to satisfy his longing, and he turned his back with jibes upon her when she bargained about money.

It is worthy of notice that, at the same time, he was an excellent son and brother. His sister was left a widow with two children; whereupon he took them all into his house, without bragging about what appears to have been the best action of his life. In the same spirit he conscientiously performed what he conceived to be his duty to Cecchino, murdered by a musketeer in Rome. After nursing his revenge till he was nearly mad, he stole out one evening and stabbed the murderer in the back.<sup>20</sup> So violent was the blow that he could not extricate his dagger from the man's spine, but had to leave it sticking in his nape. Next to his own egotism the strongest feelings in Cellini were domestic; and he showed them at one moment by charity to his sister's family, at another by a savage assassination.

After killing the musketeer, Cellini retired for refuge to the house of Alessandro de' Medici, Duke of Cività di Penna, who had been his brother's patron. The matter reached the Pope's ears, for whom Benvenuto was at work upon crown jewels. Clement sent for him, and simply said: 'Now you have recovered your health, Benvenuto, take care of yourself.' This shows how little they thought of homicide in Rome. After killing a man, some powerful protector had to be sought, who was usually a cardinal, since the cardinals had right of sanctuary

<sup>18</sup> Notice lib. i. cap. 40, p. 90, the dialogue between Cellini and the old woman, on his return to the paternal house: 'Oh dimmi, gobba perversa,' &c.

<sup>19</sup> 'Per essere il mondo intenebrato di peste e di guerra,' is a phrase of Cellini's, i. 40.

<sup>20</sup> Lib. i. cap. 51.

in their palaces. There the assassin lay in hiding, in order to avoid his victim's friends and relatives, until such time as a pardon and safe-conduct and absolution had been obtained from his Holiness. When Cellini, soon after this occurrence, stabbed a private enemy, by name Pompeo, two cardinals were anxious to screen him from pursuit, and disputed the privilege of harbouring so talented a criminal.<sup>21</sup> The Pope, with marvellous good-humour, observed: 'I have never heard of the death of Pompeo, but often of Benvenuto's provocation; so let a safe-conduct be instantly made out, and that will secure him from all manner of danger.' A friend of Pompeo's who was present, ventured to insinuate that this was dangerous policy. The Pope put him down at once by saying, 'You do not understand these matters; I would have you know that men who are unique in their profession, like Benvenuto, are not subject to the laws.' Whether Paul really said these words, may be doubted; but it is clear that much was conceded to a clever workman, and that the laws were a mere *brutum fulmen*. No man of spirit appealed to them. Cellini, for example, was poisoned by a parish priest near Florence:<sup>22</sup> yet he never brought the man to justice; and in the case of his own murders, he only dreaded the retaliation of his victims' kinsmen. On one occasion, indeed, the civil arm came down upon him; when the city guard attempted to arrest him for Pompeo's assassination. He beat them off with swords and sticks; and, after all, it appeared that they were only acting at the instigation of Pier Luigi Farnese, whom Benvenuto had offended.

During his residence at Rome, Cellini witnessed an incantation conducted in the Colosseum by a Sicilian priest and necromancer. The conjurer and the artist, accompanied by two friends, and by a boy, who was to act as medium, went by night to the amphitheatre. The magic circle was drawn; fires were lighted, and perfumes scattered on the flames. Then the spirit-seer began his charms, calling in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, or what passed for such, upon the leaders of the hosts of hell. The whole hollow space now filled with phantoms, surging up by legions, rushing down from the galleries, issuing from subterranean caverns, and wheeling to and fro with signs of fury. All the party, says Cellini, were thrown into consternation, except himself, who, though terribly afraid, kept up the fainting spirits of the rest. At last the conjurer summoned courage to inquire when Cellini might hope to be restored to his lost love, Angelica;—for this was the trivial object of the incantation. The demons answered (how we are not told) that he would meet her ere a month had passed away. This prophecy, as it happened, was fulfilled. Then they redoubled their attacks; the necromancer kept crying out that the peril was most imminent, until the matin bells of Rome swung through the darkness, freeing them at last

<sup>21</sup> Lib. i. cap. 74. Clement was dead, and Paul III. had just been elected, 1534. Paul sent Cellini a safe-conduct and pardon for Pompeo's murder to Florence in 1535. Lib. i. cap. 81.

<sup>22</sup> Lib. ii. cap. 104.

from fear. As they walked home, the boy, holding the Sicilian by his robe and Benvenuto by his mantle, told them that he still saw giants leaping with fantastic gestures on their path, now running along the house roofs, and now dancing on the earth. Each one of them that night dreamed in his bed of devils.<sup>23</sup>

The interest of this incident is almost wholly picturesque. It throws but little light upon the superstitions of the age.<sup>24</sup> The magnitude of the Colosseum, the popular legends concerning its magical origin, and the terrible uses of blood to which it had been put, invested this building with peculiar mystery. Robbers haunted the huge caves. Rubbish and weeds choked the passages. Sickly trees soared up from darkness into light among the porches, and the moon peered through the empty vomitories. If we call imagination to our aid, and place the necromancers and their brazier in the centre of this space;—if we fancy the priest's chaunted spells, the sacred names invoked in his unholy rites, the shuddering terror of the conscience-stricken accomplices, and Cellini with defiant mien but quailing heart, we can well believe that he saw more than the amphitheatre contained. Whether the spectres were projected by the conjurer from a magic lantern on the smoke that issued from his heaps of blazing wood, so that the volumes of vapour, agitated by the wind and rolling in thick spirals, showed them retreating and advancing, and varying in shape and number, is a matter for conjecture. Cellini firmly believed that he had been environed by living squadrons of the spirits of the damned.

The next four years were spent by Cellini chiefly in Rome, in peril of his life at several seasons, owing to the animosity of Pier Luigi Farnese. One journey he took at this period to Venice, passing through Ferrara, where he came to blows with the Florentine exiles. It is interesting to find the respectable historian Jacopo Nardi involved, if only as a peace-maker, in this affray.<sup>25</sup> He also visited Florence and cast dies for Alessandro's silver coinage. It was here that he found opportunities of observing the perilous intimacy between the Duke of Cività di Penna and his cousin—*quel passo malinconico filosofo di Lorenzino*.<sup>26</sup> In April 1537, having quarrelled with the Pope, who seems to have adopted Pier Luigi's prejudice against him, Cellini set out for France with two of his workmen. They passed through Florence, Bologna, Venice, and Padua, staying in the last place to model a medallion portrait of Pietro

<sup>23</sup> Lib. i. cap. 64.

<sup>24</sup> See, however, what is said about the mountain villages of Norcia being good for incantations. That district in Roman times was famous for such superstitions. Burckhardt, *Die Cultur der Renaissance in Italien*, pp. 427-428, gives curious information on this topic.

<sup>25</sup> Lib. i. cap. 76.

<sup>26</sup> Lib. i. cap. 88. 'That mad melancholy philosopher Lorenzino'. Cf. i. 80 and 81. 'Molte volte lo trovavo a dormicchiare dopo desinare con quel suo Lorenzino, che poi l'ammazzo, e non altri; ed io molto mi maravigliavo che un duca di quella sorte così si fidava. . . . il duca' che lo teneva quando per pazzericcio, e quando per poltrone.' Cf. again, cap. 89.

Bembo;<sup>27</sup> then they crossed the Grisons by the Bernina and Albula passes. We hear nothing about this part of the journey, except that the snow was heavy, and that they ran great danger of their lives. Cellini must have traversed some of the most romantic scenery of Switzerland at the best season of the year; yet not a word escapes him about the beauty of the Alps or the wonder of the glaciers, which he saw for the first time. The pleasure we derive from contemplating savage scenery was unknown to the Italians of the sixteenth century; the height and cold, the gloom and solitude of mountains struck them with a sense of terror or of dreariness. On the Lake of Wallenstadt Cellini met with a party of Germans, whom he hated as cordially as an Athenian of the age of Pericles might have loathed the Scythians for their barbarism.<sup>28</sup> The Italians embarked in one boat, the Germans in another; Cellini being under the impression that the Northern lakes would not be so likely to drown him as those of his own country. However, when a storm swept down the hills, he took a terrible fright, and compelled the boatmen at the point of the poniard to put him and his company ashore. The description of their struggles to drag their heavily laden horses over the uneven ground near Wesen, is extremely graphic, and gives a good notion of the dangers of the road in those days.<sup>29</sup> That night they 'heard the watch sing at all hours very agreeably; and as the houses of that town were all of wood, he kept bidding them to take care of their fires.' Next day they arrived, not without other accidents, at Zurich, 'a marvellous city, as clear and polished as a jewel.' Thence by Solothurn, Lausanne, Geneva, and Lyons, they made their way to Paris.

This long and troublesome journey led to nothing, for Cellini grew weary of following the French Court about from place to place; his health too failed him, and he decided that he would rather die in Italy than France.<sup>30</sup> Accordingly he returned to Rome, and there, not long after his arrival, he was arrested by the order of Pope Paul III.<sup>31</sup> The charge against him, preferred by one of his own prentices, was this: During the siege of Rome, he had been employed by Clement to melt down the tiaras and papal ornaments, in order that the precious stones might be conveyed away in secrecy. He did so; and afterwards confessed to having kept a portion of the gold filings found in the cinders of his brazier during the operation. For this crime Clement gave him absolution.<sup>32</sup> Now, however, he was accused of having stolen gold and jewels to the amount of nearly eighty thousand ducats. 'The avarice of the Pope, but more that of his bastard, then called Duke of Castro,' inclined Paul to believe this charge; and Pier Luigi was allowed to farm

<sup>27</sup> This glimpse of Bembo in his Paduan villa is very pleasing. Lib. i. cap. 94.

<sup>28</sup> 'Quei diavoli di quei gentiluomini tedeschi.' This is, however, the language he uses about nearly all foreigners—Spaniards, French, and English.

<sup>29</sup> Lib. i. cap. 96. 'Io ero tutto armato di maglia con istivali grossi e con uno scoppietto in mano, e pioveva quanto Iddio ne sapeva mandare,' &c.

<sup>30</sup> Lib. i. cap. 98.

<sup>31</sup> *Ib.* cap. 101.

<sup>32</sup> See lib. i. cap. 38, 43.



the case. Cellini was examined by the Governor of Rome and two assessors; in spite of his vehement protestations of innocence, the absence of any evidence against him, and the sound arguments adduced in his defence, he was committed to the castle of S. Angelo. When he received his sentence, he called heaven and earth to witness, thanking God that he had 'the happiness not to be confined for some error of his sinful nature, as generally happens to young men.' Whereupon 'the brute of a Governor replied, Yet you have killed enough men in your time.' This remark was pertinent; but it provoked a torrent of abuse and a long enumeration of his services from the virtuous Cellini.

The account of this imprisonment, and especially of the hypochondriacal Governor who thought he was a bat and used to flap his arms and squeak when night was coming on, is highly entertaining.<sup>33</sup> Not less interesting is the description of Cellini's daring escape from the castle. In climbing over the last wall, he fell and broke his leg, and was carried by a waterman to the palace of the Cardinal Cornaro. There he lay in hiding, visited by all the rank and fashion of Rome, who were not a little curious to see the hero of so perilous an escapade. Cornaro promised to secure his pardon, but eventually exchanged him for a bishopric. This remarkable proceeding illustrates the manners of the Papal Court. The cardinal wanted a benefice for one of his followers, and the Pope wished to get his son's enemy once more into his power. So the two ecclesiastics bargained together, and by mutual kind offices attained their several ends.

Cellini with his broken leg went back to languish in his prison. He found the flighty Governor furious because he had 'flown away,' eluding his bat's eyes and wings. The rigour used towards him made him dread the worst extremities. Cast into a condemned cell, he first expected to be flayed alive; and when this terror was removed, he perceived the crystals of a pounded jewel in his food. According to his own account of this mysterious circumstance, Messer Durante Duranti of Brescia, one of Cellini's numerous enemies, had given a diamond of small value to be broken up and mixed with a salad served to him at dinner. The jeweller to whom this charge was entrusted, kept the diamond and substituted a beryl, thinking that the inferior stone would have the same murderous properties. To the avarice of this man Cellini attributed his escape from a lingering death by inflammation of the mucous membrane.<sup>34</sup>

During his first imprisonment he had occupied a fair chamber in the upper turret of the castle. He was now removed to a dungeon below ground where Fra Fojano, the reformer, had been starved to death. The floor was wet and infested with crawling creatures. A few reflected sunbeams slanting from a narrow window for two hours of the

<sup>33</sup> The Governor, perplexed by Cellini's vaunt that if he only tried he was sure he could fly, put him under strict guard, saying, 'Benvenuto è un pipistrello contrafatto, ed io sono un pipistrello da dovero.'

<sup>34</sup> Lib. i. cap. 125.

afternoon, was all the light that reached him. Here he lay, alone, unable to move because of his broken leg, with his hair and teeth falling away, and with nothing to occupy him but a Bible and a volume of Villani's 'Chronicles.' His spirit, however, was indomitable; and the passionate energy of the man, hitherto manifested in ungoverned acts of fury, took the form of ecstasy. He began the study of the Bible from the first chapter of Genesis, and trusting firmly to the righteousness of his own cause, compared himself to all the saints and martyrs of Scripture, men of whom the world was not worthy. He sang psalms, prayed continually, and composed a poem in praise of his prison. With a piece of charcoal he made a great drawing of angels surrounding God the Father on the wall. Once only his courage gave way: he determined on suicide, and so placed a beam that it should fall on him like a trap. When all was ready, an unseen hand took violent hold of him, and dashed him on the ground at a considerable distance. From this moment his dungeon was visited by angels, who healed his broken leg, and reasoned with him of religion.

The mention of these visions reminds us that Cellini had become acquainted with Savonarola's writings during his first imprisonment.<sup>35</sup> Impressed with the grandeur of the prophet's dreams, and exalted by the reading of the Bible, he no doubt mistook his delirious fancies for angelic visitors, and in the fervour of his enthusiasm laid claim to inspiration. One of these hallucinations is particularly striking. He had prayed that he might see the sun at least in trance, if it were impossible that he should look on it again with waking eyes. But, while awake and in possession of his senses, he was hurried suddenly away and carried to a room, where the invisible power sustaining him appeared in human shape, 'like a youth whose beard is but just growing, with a face most marvellous, fair, but of austere and far from wanton beauty.' In that room were all the men who had ever lived and died on earth; and thence they two went together, and came into a narrow street, one side whereof was bright with sunlight. Then Cellini asked the angel how he might behold the sun; and the angel pointed to certain steps upon the side of a house. Up these Cellini climbed, and came into the full blaze of the sun, and, though dazzled by its brightness, he gazed steadfastly and took his fill. While he looked, the rays fell away upon the left side and the disk shone like a bath of molten gold. This surface swelled, and from the glory came the figure of a Christ upon the cross, which moved and stood beside the rays. Again the surface swelled, and from the glory came the figure of Madonna and her Child; and at the right hand of the sun there knelt S. Peter in his sacerdotal robes, pleading Cellini's cause; and 'full of shame that such foul wrong should be done to Christians in his house.' This vision marvellously strengthened Cellini's soul, and he began to hope with confidence for liberty. When free again, he modelled the figures he had seen in gold.

The religious phase in Cellini's history requires some special comment,

<sup>35</sup> Lib. i. cap. 105.

since it is precisely at this point that he most faithfully personifies the spirit of his age and nation. That he was a devout Catholic there is no question. He made two pilgrimages to Loreto, and another to S. Francis of Vernia. To S. Lucy he dedicated a golden eye after his recovery from an illness. He was, moreover, always anxious to get absolution from the Pope. More than this; he continually sustained himself at the great crises of his life, when in peril of imprisonment, while defending himself against assassins, and again on the eve of casting his 'Perseus,' by direct and passionate appeals to God. Yet his religion had but little effect upon his life; and he often used it as a source of moral strength in doing deeds repugnant to real piety. Like love, he put it off and on quite easily, reverting to it when he found himself in danger or bad spirits, and forgetting it again when he was prosperous. Thus in the dungeon of S. Angelo he vowed to visit the Holy Sepulchre if God would grant him to behold the sun. This vow he forgot until he met with disappointment at the Court of Francis, and then he suddenly determined to travel to Jerusalem. The offer of a salary of seven hundred crowns restored his spirits, and he thought no more about his vow.

While he loved his life so dearly and indulged so freely in the pleasures of this earth, he made a virtue of necessity as soon as death approached, crying, 'The sooner I am delivered from the prison of this world, the better; especially as I am sure of salvation, being unjustly put to death.' His good opinion of himself extended to the certainty he felt of heaven. Forgetting his murders and debaucheries, he sustained his courage with devotion when all other sources failed. As to the divine government of the world, he halted between two opinions. Whether the stars or Providence had the upper hand, he could not clearly say; but by the stars he understood a power antagonistic to his will, by Providence a force that helped him to do what he liked. There is a similar confusion in his mind about the Pope. He goes to Clement submissively for absolution from homicide and theft, saying, 'I am at the feet of your Holiness, who have the full power of absolving, and I request you to give me permission to confess and communicate, that I may with your favour be restored to the divine grace.' He also tells Paul that the sight of Christ's vicar, in whom there is an awful representation of the divine Majesty, makes him tremble. Yet at another time he speaks of Clement being 'transformed to a savage beast,' and talks of him as 'that poor man Pope Clement.'<sup>36</sup> Of Paul he says that he 'believed neither in God nor in any other article of religion;' he sincerely regrets not having killed him by accident during the siege of Rome, abuses him for his avarice, casts his bastards in his teeth, and relates with relish the crime of forgery for which in his youth he was imprisoned in the castle of S. Angelo.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, the Italians treated

<sup>36</sup> 'Il Papa diventato così pessima bestia,' lib. i. 58; 'Il Papa entrato in un bestial furore,' *ib.* 60; 'Quel povero uomo di Papa Clemente,' *ib.* 103.

<sup>37</sup> *Ib.* 36, 101, 111.

the Pope as negroes treat their fetishes. If they had cause to dislike him, they beat and heaped insults on him—like the Florentines who described Sixtus IV. as 'leno matris suæ, adulterorum minister, diabolici vicarius,' and his spiritual offspring as 'simonia, luxus, homicidium, prôditio, hæresis.' On the other hand, they really thought that he could open heaven and shut the gates of hell.

At the end of the year 1539, the Cardinal Ippolito d'Este appeared in Rome with solicitations from Francis I. that the Pope would release Cellini and allow him to enter his service.<sup>38</sup> Upon this the prison door was opened. Cellini returned to his old restless life of violence and pleasure. We find him renewing his favourite pastimes—killing, wantonning, disputing with his employers, and working diligently at his trade. The temporary saint and visionary becomes once more the bravo and the artist. A more complete parallel to the consequences of revivalism in Italy could not be found.<sup>39</sup> Meanwhile the first period of his history is closed and the second begins.

Cellini's account of his residence in France has much historical interest besides the charm of its romance. When he first joined the Court, he found Francis travelling from city to city with a retinue of eighteen thousand persons and twelve thousand horses. Frequently they came to places where no accommodation could be had, and the suite were lodged in wretched tents. It is not wonderful that Cellini should complain of the French being less civilised than the Italians of his time. Francis among his ladies and courtiers, pretending to a knowledge of the arts, sauntering with his splendid train into the goldsmith's workshop, encouraging Cellini's violence with a boyish love of mischief, vain and flattered, peevish, petulant, and fond of show, appears upon these pages with a life-like vividness.<sup>40</sup> When the time came for settling in Paris, the King presented his goldsmith with a castle called Le Petit Nesle, and made him lord thereof by letters of naturalisation. This house stood where the Institute has since been built; of its extent we may judge from the number of occupations carried on within its precincts when Cellini entered into possession. He found there a tennis-court, a distillery, a printing press, and a factory of saltpetre, besides residents engaged in other trades. Cellini's claims were resisted. Probably the occupiers did not relish the intrusion of a foreigner. So he stormed the place and installed himself by force of arms. Similar violence was needed in order to maintain himself in possession; but this Cellini loved, and had he been let alone, it is probable he would have died of *ennui*.

<sup>38</sup> The scene is well described, lib. i. 127. The Pope was wont to have a weekly debauch, and the cardinal chose this favourable moment for his appeal: 'Gli usava una volta la settimana di fare una crapula assai gagliarda, perchè da poi la gomitava. . . . Allora il papa, sentendosi appressare all' ora del suo vomito, e perchè la troppa abbondanza del vino ancora faceva l' ufizio suo, disse,' &c.

<sup>39</sup> See *Age of the Despots*, p. 315.

<sup>40</sup> See especially the visit to the Paris workshop, lib. ii. cap. 15, and the scene in the Gallery at Fontainebleau, ib. 41.

Difficulties of all kinds, due in part to his ungovernable temper, in part to his ill-regulated life, in part to his ignorance of French habits, gathered round him. He fell into disfavour with Madame d'Estampes, the mistress of the King; and here it may be mentioned that many of his troubles arose from his inability to please noble women.<sup>41</sup> Proud, self-confident, overbearing, and unable to command his words or actions, Cellini was unfitted to pay court to princes. Then again he quarrelled with his brother artists, and made the Bolognese painter, Primaticcio, his enemy. After being attacked by assassins and robbers on more than one occasion, he was involved in two lawsuits. He draws a graphic picture of the French courts of justice, with their judge as grave as Plato, their advocates all chattering at once, their perjured Norman witnesses, and the ushers at the doors vociferating *Paix, paix, Satan, allez, paix*. In this cry Cellini recognised the gibberish at the beginning of the seventh canto of Dante's 'Inferno.' But the most picturesque group in the whole scene presented to us is that made by Cellini himself, armed and mailed, and attended by his prentices in armour, as they walked into the court to browbeat justice with the clamour of their voice. If we are to trust his narrative, he fought his way out of one most dangerous trial by simple vociferation. Afterwards he took the law, as usual, into his own hands. One pair of litigants were beaten; Caterina was nearly kicked to death; and the attorneys were threatened with the sword.

In the midst of these disturbances, Cellini began some important works for Francis. At Paris the King employed him to make huge silver candelabra, and at Fontainebleau to restore the castle gate. For the château of Fontainebleau Cellini executed the nymph in bronze, reclining among trophies of the chase, which may still be seen in the Louvre. It is a long-limbed, lifeless figure, without meaning—a snuff-box ornament enlarged to a gigantic size. Francis, who cannot have had good taste in art, if what Cellini makes him say be genuine, admired these designs above the bronze copies of the Vatican marbles he had recently received. He seems to have felt some personal regard for Benvenuto, and to have done all he could to retain him in his service. The animosity of Madame d'Estampes, and a grudge against his old patron, Ippolito d'Este, however, determined the restless craftsman to quit Paris. Leaving his castle, his unfinished works, and other property behind him in the care of Ascanio, his friend and pupil, he returned alone to Italy. This step, taken in a moment of restless pique, was ever after regretted by Cellini, who looked back with yearning from Florence to the generosity of Francis.

Cosimo de' Medici was indeed a very different patron from Francis. Cautious, little-minded, meddling, with a true Florentine's love of bargaining and playing cunning tricks, he pretended to protect the arts, but did not understand the part he had assumed. He was always short of money, and surrounded by old avaricious servants, through whose hands

<sup>41</sup> His quarrels, for example, with the Duchess of Florence.

his meagre presents passed. As a connoisseur, he did not trust his own judgment, thus laying himself open to the intrigues of inferior artists. Henceforward a large part of Cellini's time was wasted in wrangling with the Duke's steward, squabbling with Bandinelli and Ammanati, and endeavouring to overcome the coldness or to meet the vacillations of his patron. Those who wish to gain insight into the life of an artist at Court in the sixteenth century, will do well to study attentively the chapters devoted by Cellini to his difficulties with the Duchess, and his wordy warfares with Bandinelli.<sup>42</sup> This atmosphere of intrigue and animosity was not uncongenial to Benvenuto; and as far as words and blows went, he almost always got the best of it. Nothing, for example, could be keener and more cutting than the very just criticism he made in Bandinelli's presence of his 'Hercules and Cacus.' 'Quel bestial buaccio Bandinello,' as he delights to name him, could do nothing but retort with vulgar terms of insult.<sup>43</sup>

The great achievement of this third period was the modelling and casting of the 'Perseus.' No episode in Cellini's biography is narrated with more force than the climax to his long-protracted labours, when at last, amid the chaos and confusion of innumerable accidents, the metal in his furnace liquefied and filled the mould. After the statue was uncovered in the Loggia de' Lanzi, where it now stands, Cellini achieved a triumph adequate to his own highest expectations. Odes and sonnets in Italian, Greek, and Latin, were written in its praise. Pontormo and Bronzino, the painters, loaded it with compliments. Cellini, ruffling with hand on hilt in silks and satins through the square, was pointed out to foreigners as the great sculptor who had cast the admirable bronze. It was, in truth, no slight distinction for a Florentine artist to erect a statue beneath the Loggia de' Lanzi in the square of the Signory. Every great event in Florentine history had taken place on that piazza. Every name of distinction among the citizens of Florence was connected with its monuments. To this day we may read the course of Florentine art by studying its architecture and sculpture; and not the least of its many ornaments, in spite of all that may be said against it, is the 'Perseus' of Cellini.

Cellini completed the 'Perseus' in 1554. His autobiography is carried down to the year 1562, when it abruptly terminates. It appears that in 1558 he received the tonsure and the first ecclesiastical orders; but two years later on he married a wife, and died at the age of sixty-nine, leaving three legitimate children. He was buried honourably, and a funeral oration was pronounced above his bier in the Chapter House of the Annunziata.

<sup>42</sup> Lib. ii. cap. 83, 84, 87, 70, 71.

<sup>43</sup> 'That beastly big ox, Bandinelli.' Cf. cap. 70 for the critique. It may be said here, in passing, that the insult of Bandinelli, 'Oh sta cheto, soddomitaccio,' seems to have been justified by Benvenuto's conduct, though of course he carefully conceals it in his memoirs. After the charge brought against him by Cencio, for instance, he thought it better to leave Florence.—*Ib.* cap. 61, 62.

As a man, Cellini excites more interest than as an artist; and for this reason I have refrained from entering into minute criticism of his few remaining masterpieces. It has been well said that the two extremes of society, the statesman and the craftsman, find their point of meeting in Machiavelli and Cellini, inasmuch as both recognise no moral authority but the individual will.<sup>44</sup> The *virtù* extolled by Machiavelli is exemplified by Cellini. Machiavelli bids his prince ignore the laws; Cellini respects no tribunal and takes justice into his own hands. The word conscience does not occur in Machiavelli's phraseology of ethics; conscience never makes a coward of Cellini, and in the dungeons of S. Angelo he is visited by no remorse. If we seek a literary parallel for the statesman and the artist in their idealisation of force and personal character, we find it in Pietro Aretino. In him, too, conscience is extinct; for him, also, there is no respect of King or Pope; he has placed himself above law, and substituted his own will for justice. With his pen, as Cellini with his dagger, he assassinates; his cynicism serves him for a coat of armour. And so abject is society, so natural has tyranny become, that he extorts blackmail from monarchs, makes princes tremble, and receives smooth answers to his insults from Buonarroti. These three men, Machiavelli, Cellini, and Aretino, each in his own line, and with the proper differences that pertain to philosophic genius, artistic skill, and ribald ruffianism, sufficiently indicate the dissolution of the social bond in Italy. They mark their age as the age of adventurers, bandits, bullies, Ishmaelites, and tyrants.

<sup>44</sup> Edgar Quinet, *Les Révolutions d'Italie*, p. 358.



## CHAPTER X

### THE EPIGONI

*Full Development and Decline of Painting—Exhaustion of the old Motives—Relation of Lionardo to his Pupils—His Legacy to the Lombard School—Bernardino Luini—Gaudenzio Ferrari—The Devotion of the Sacri Monti—The School of Raphael—Nothing left but Imitation—Unwholesome Influences of Rome—Giulio Romano—Michael Angelosque Mannerists—Misconception of Michael Angelo—Correggio founds no School—Parmigianino—Macchinisti—The Bolognese—After-growth of Art in Florence—Andrea del Sarto—His Followers—Pontormo—Bronzino—Revival of Painting in Siena—Sodoma—His Influence on Pacchia, Beccafumi, Peruzzi—Garofalo and Dosso Dossi at Ferrara—The Campi at Cremona—Brescia, and Bergamo—The Decadence in the second half of the Sixteenth Century—The Counter-Reformation—Extinction of the Renaissance Impulse.*

IN the foregoing chapters I have not sought to write again the history of art, so much as to keep in view the relation between Italian art and the leading intellectual impulses of the Renaissance. In the masters of the sixteenth century—Lionardo, Raphael, Michael Angelo, Correggio, and the Venetians—the force inherent in the Italian genius for painting reached full development. What remained was but an after-bloom rapidly tending to decadence. To surpass those men in their own line seemed impossible. What they had achieved was so transcendent that imitation satisfied their successors; and if they refused imitation, originality had to be sought by deviating into extravagances. Meanwhile no new stock of thoughts had been acquired; and students of history are now well aware that for really great art ideas common to the nation are essential. The motives suggested by mediæval Christianity, after passing through successive stages of treatment in the *quattrocento*, had received the grand and humane handling of the golden age. The motives of revived paganism in like manner were exhausted, and at this time the feeling for antiquity had lost its primal freshness. It might seem superfluous to carry this inquiry further, when we have thus confessedly attained the culminating point of painting. Yet the sketch attempted in this volume would be incomplete and liable to misinterpretation, if no account were taken of the legacy bequeathed to the next generation by the great masters.

Lionardo da Vinci formed, as we have seen, a school at Milan. It was the special good fortune of his pupils that what he actually accomplished, bore no proportion to the suggestiveness of his teaching and the fertility of his invention. Of finished work he left but little to the world; while his sketches and designs, the teeming thoughts of his

creative brain, were an inestimable heritage. The whole of this rich legacy of masterpieces, projected, but not executed, was characterised by a feeling for beauty which has fallen to no other painter. When we examine the sketches in the Royal Collection at Windsor, we perceive that the exceeding sense of loveliness possessed by Lionardo could not have failed to animate his pupils with a high spirit of art. At the same time the extraordinary variety of his drawing—sometimes reminding us of German method, sometimes modern in the manner of French and English draughtsmen—by turns bold and delicate, broad and minute in detail—afforded to his school examples of perfect treatment in a multiplicity of different styles. There was no formality of fixed unalterable precedent in Lionardo, nothing for his scholars to repeat with the monotony of mannerism.

It remained for his disciples, each in his own sphere, with inferior powers and feebler intellect, to perpetuate the genius of their master. Thus the spirit of Lionardo continued to live in Lombardy after he was dead. There alone imitation was really fruitful, because it did not imply mere copying. Instead of attempting to give a fresh and therefore a strained turn to motives that had already received consummate treatment, Lionardo's successors were able to execute what he had planned but had not carried to completion. Nor was the prestige of his style so oppressive through the mass of pictures painted by his hand as to check individuality or to prevent the pupil from working out such portions of the master's vein as suited his own talent. Each found enough suggested, but not used, to give his special faculty free scope. This is in fact the reason why the majority of pictures ascribed to Lionardo are really the production of his school. They have the excellence of original work, but not such excellence as Lionardo could have given them. Their completion is due, as searching criticism proves, to lesser men; but the conception belongs to the greatest.

Andrea Salaino, Marco d'Oggiono, Francesco Melzi, Giovanni Antonio Beltraffio, and Cesare da Sesto, are all of them skilled workmen, losing and finding their individuality, as just described, in the manner of their master. Salaino brings exquisite delicacy of execution; d'Oggiono, wild and bizarre beauty; Melzi, the refinements of a miniaturist; Beltraffio, hard brilliancy of light and colour; Cesare da Sesto, somewhat of effeminate sweetness; and thus the qualities of many men emerge, to blend themselves again in what is Lionardo's own. It is surely not without significance that this metempsychosis of genius should have happened in the case of Lionardo, himself the magician of Renaissance art, the lover of all things double-natured and twin-souled.

Two painters of the Lombard school, Bernardino Luini and Gaudenzio Ferrari, demand separate notice. Without Lionardo it is difficult to say what Luini would have been: so thoroughly did he appropriate his teacher's type of face, and, in oil-painting, his refinement. And yet Luini stands on his own ground, in no sense an imitator, with a genius more simple and idyllic than Da Vinci's. Little conception of his charm

can be formed by those who have not seen his frescoes in the Brera and S. Maurizio Maggiore at Milan, in the church of the Angeli at Lugano, or in the pilgrimage church of Saronno. To the circumstance of his having done his best work in places hardly visited until of late years, may in part perhaps be attributed the tardy recognition of a painter eminently fitted to be popular. Luini was essentially a fresco-painter. None, perhaps, of all the greatest Italian *frescantì* realised a higher quality of brilliancy without gaudiness, by the scale of colours he selected and by the purity with which he used them in simple combinations. His frescoes are never dull or heavy in tone, never glaring, never thin or chalky. He knew how to render them both luminous and rich, without falling into the extremes that render fresco-paintings often less attractive than oil-pictures. His feeling for loveliness of form was original and exquisite. The joy of youth found in Luini an interpreter only less powerful and even more tender than in Raphael. While he shared with the Venetians their sensibility to nature, he had none of their sensuousness or love of pomp. In idyllic painting of a truly great type I know of nothing more delightful than his figures of young musicians going to the marriage feast of Mary, nothing more graceful than the genius ivy-crowned and seated at the foot of the cross.<sup>1</sup> The sentiment for naïve and artless grace, so fully possessed by Luini, gave freshness to his treatment of conventional religious themes. Under his touch they appeal immediately to the most untutored taste, without the aid of realistic or sensational effects. Even S. Sebastian and S. Rocco, whom it is difficult to represent with any novelty of attitude or expression, became for him the motives of fresh poetry, unsought but truly felt.<sup>2</sup> Among all the Madonnas ever painted his picture of Mary with the espalier of white roses, and another where she holds the infant Christ to pluck a purple columbine, distinguish themselves by this engaging spontaneity. The frescoes of the marriage of the Virgin and of S. Catherine carried by angels to Mount Sinai might be cited for the same quality of freshness and unstudied poetry.<sup>3</sup>

When the subject demanded the exercise of grave emotion, Luini rose to the occasion without losing his simplicity. The 'Martyrdom of S. Catherine' and the fresco of Christ after the Flagellation are two masterpieces, wherein the depths of pathos have been sounded, and not a single note of discord is struck.<sup>4</sup> All harsh and disagreeable details are either eliminated, or so softened that the general impression, as in Pergolese's music, is one of profoundest and yet sweetest sorrow. Luini's genius was not tragic. The nearest approach to a dramatic motive in his work is the figure of the Magdalen kneeling before the cross, with her long yellow hair streaming over her shoulders, and her arms thrown

<sup>1</sup> Frescoes in the Brera and at Lugano.

<sup>2</sup> S. Maurizio, on the Screen, inner church. Lugano in the Angeli.

<sup>3</sup> In the Brera. See also the Madonna, with Infant Christ, S. John, and a Lamb, at Lugano.

<sup>4</sup> Side chapel of S. Maurizio at Milan. These frescoes are, in my opinion, Luini's very best. The whole church is a wonderful monument of Lombard art.

backwards in an ecstasy of grief.<sup>5</sup> He did well to choose moments that stir tender sympathy—the piety of deep and calm devotion. How truly he felt them—more truly, I think, than Perugino in his best period—is proved by the correspondence they awake in us. Like melodies, they create a mood in the spectator.

What Luini did not learn from Lionardo was the art of composition. Taken one by one, the figures that make up his 'Marriage of the Virgin' at Saronno, are beautiful; but the whole picture is clumsily constructed; and what is true of this, may be said of every painting in which he attempted complicated grouping.<sup>6</sup> We feel him to be a great artist only where the subject does not demand the symmetrical arrangement of many parts.

Gaudenzio Ferrari was a genius of a different order, more robust, more varied, but less single-minded than Luini. His style reveals the influences of a many-sided, ill-assimilated education; blending the manners of Bramantino, Lionardo, and Raphael without proper fusion. Though Ferrari travelled much, and learned his art in several schools, he, like Luini, can only be studied in the Milanese district—at his birthplace Varallo, at Saronno, Vercelli, and Milan. It is to be regretted that a painter of such singular ability, almost unrivalled at moments in the expression of intense feeling and the representation of energetic movement, should have lacked a simpler training, or have been unable to adopt a manner more uniform. There is a strength of wing in his imaginative flight, a swiftness and impetuosity in his execution, and a dramatic force in his conception, that almost justify Lomazzo's choice of the eagle for his emblem. Yet he was unable to collect his powers, or to rule them. The distractions of an age that had produced its masterpieces, were too strong for him; and what he failed to find was balance. His picture of the 'Martyrdom of S. Catherine,' where reminiscences of Raphael and Lionardo mingle with the uncouth motives of an earlier style in a medley without unity of composition or harmony of colouring, might be chosen as a typical instance of great resources misapplied.<sup>7</sup>

The most pleasing of Ferrari's paintings are choirs of angels, sorrowing or rejoicing, some of them exquisitely and originally beautiful, all animated with unusual life, and poised upon wings powerful enough to bear them—veritable 'birds of God.'<sup>8</sup> His dramatic scenes from sacred history, rich in novel motives and exuberantly full of invention, crowd the churches of Vercelli; while a whole epic of the Passion is painted in fresco above the altar of S. Maria delle Grazie at Varallo, covering the wall from basement to ceiling. The prodigality of power displayed by Ferrari makes up for much of crudity in style and confusion in aim;

<sup>5</sup> 'Crucifixion' at Lugano.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, the oil-paintings in the cathedral of Como, so fascinating in their details, so lame in composition.

<sup>7</sup> In the Brera.

<sup>8</sup> Frescoes at Saronno and in the Sacro Monte at Varallo.

nor can we refuse the tribute of warmest admiration to a master, who, when the schools of Rome and Florence were sinking into emptiness and bombast, preserved the fire of feeling for serious themes. What was deadly in the neo-paganism of the Renaissance—its frivolity and worldliness, corroding the very sources of belief in men who made of art a decoration for their sensuous existence—had not penetrated to those Lombard valleys where Ferrari and Luini worked. There the devotion of the Sacri Monti still maintained an intelligence between the people and the artist, far more fruitful of results to painting than the patronage of splendour-loving cardinals and nobles.<sup>9</sup>

Passing from Lionardo to Raphael, we find exactly the reverse of what has hitherto been noticed. Raphael worked out the mine of his own thought so thoroughly—so completely exhausted the motives of his invention, and carried his style to such perfection—that he left nothing unused for his followers. We have seen that he formed a school of subordinates in Rome who executed his later frescoes after his designs. Some of these men have names that can be mentioned—Giulio Romano, of whom more hereafter; Perino del Vaga, the decorator of Genoese palaces in a style of over-blown but gorgeous Raphaelism; Andrea Sabbatini, who carried the Roman tradition down to Naples; Francesco Penni, Giovanni da Udine, and Polidoro da Caravaggio. Their work, even while superintended by Raphael himself, began to show the signs of decadence. In his Roman manner the dramatic element was conspicuous; and to carry dramatic painting beyond the limits of good style in art is unfortunately easy. The Hall of Constantine, left unfinished at his death, still further proved how little his pupils could do without him.<sup>10</sup> When Raphael died, the breath whose might sustained and made them potent ceased. For all the higher purposes of genuine art, inspiration passed from them as colour fades from eastern clouds at sunset, suddenly.

It has been customary to account for this rapid decline of the Roman school by referring to the sack of Rome in 1527. No doubt the artists suffered at that moment at least as severely as the scholars; their dispersion broke up a band of eminent painters, who might in combination and competition have still achieved great things. Yet the secret of

<sup>9</sup> The whole lake-district of Italy, where the valleys of Monte Rosa and the Simplon descend upon the plain of Lombardy, is rich in works of this school. At Luino and Lugano, on the island of San Giulio, and in the hill-set chapels of the Val Sesia, may be found traces of frescoes of incomparable beauty. One of these sites deserves special mention. Just at the point where the pathway of the Colma leaves the chestnut groves and meadows to join the road leading to Varallo, there stands a little chapel, with an open loggia of round Renaissance arches, designed and painted, according to tradition, by Ferrari, and without doubt representative of his manner. The harmony between its colours, so mellow in their ruin, its graceful arcades and quiet roofing, and the glowing tones of those granite mountains, with their wealth of vineyards, and their forests of immemorial chestnut trees, is perfect beyond words.

<sup>10</sup> This, the last of the Stanze, was only in part designed by Raphael. In spite of what I have said above, the 'Battle of Constantine,' planned by Raphael, and executed by Giulio, is a grand example of a pupil's power to carry out his master's scheme.

their subsequent failure lay far deeper; partly in the full development of their master's style, already described; and partly in the social conditions of Rome itself. Patrons, stimulated by the example of the Popes, desired vast decorative works; but they expected these to be performed rapidly and at a cheap rate. Painters, familiarised with the execution of such undertakings, forgot that hitherto the conception had been not theirs but Raphael's. Mistaking hand-work for brain-work, they audaciously accepted commissions that would have taxed the powers of the master himself. Meanwhile moral earnestness and technical conscientiousness were both extinct. The patrons required show and sensual magnificence far more than thought and substance. They were not, therefore, deterred by the vacuity and poor conceptive faculty of the artists from employing them. What the age demanded was a sumptuous parade of superficial ornament, and this the pupils of Raphael felt competent to supply without much effort. The result was that painters who under favourable circumstances might have done some meritorious work, became mere journeymen contented with the soulless insincerity of cheap effects. Giulio Romano alone, by dint of robust energy and lurid fire of fancy flickering amid the smoke of his coarser nature, achieved a triumph in this line of labour. His Palazzo del Te will always remain the monument of a specific moment in Renaissance history, since it is adequate to the intellectual conditions of a race demoralised but living still with largeness and a sense of grandeur.

Michael Angelo formed no school in the strict sense of the word. Yet his influence was not the less felt on that account, nor less powerful than Raphael's in the same direction. During his manhood the painters Sebastian del Piombo, Marcello Venusti, and Daniele da Volterra, had endeavoured to add the charm of oil-colouring to his designs; and long before his death, the seduction of his mighty mannerism had begun to exercise a fatal charm for all the schools of Italy. Painters incapable of fathoming his intention, unsympathetic to his rare type of intellect, and gifted with less than a tithe of his native force, set themselves to reproduce whatever may be justly censured in his works. To heighten and enlarge their style was reckoned a chief duty of aspiring craftsmen; and it was thought that recipes for attaining to this final perfection of the modern arts might be extracted without trouble from Michael Angelo's masterpieces. Unluckily, in proportion as his fame increased, his peculiarities grew with the advance of age more manneristic and defined; so that his imitators fixed precisely upon that which sober critics now regard as a deduction from his greatness. They failed to perceive that he owed his grandeur to his personality; and that the audacities which fascinated them, became mere whimsical extravagances when severed from his *terribilità* and sombre simplicity of impassioned thought. His power and his spirit were alike unique and uncommunicable, while the admiration of his youthful worshippers betrayed them into imitating the externals of a style that was rapidly losing spontaneity and sense of beauty. Therefore they fancied they were treading

in his footsteps and using the grand manner when they covered church-roofs and canvases with sprawling figures in distorted attitudes. Instead of studying nature, they studied Michael Angelo's cartoons, exaggerating by their unintelligent discipleship his wilfulness and arbitrary choice of form.

Vasari's and Cellini's criticisms of a master they both honestly revered may suffice to illustrate the false method adopted by these mimics of Michael Angelo's ideal. To charge him with faults proceeding from the weakness and blindness of the decadence—the faults of men too blind to read his art aright, too weak to stand on their own feet without him—would be either stupid or malicious. If at the close of the sixteenth century the mannerists sought to startle and entrance the world by empty exhibitions of muscular anatomy misunderstood, and by a braggadocio display of meaningless effects—crowding their compositions with studies from the nude, and painting agitated groups without a discernible cause for agitation—the crime surely lay with the patrons who liked such decoration, and with the journeymen who provided it. Michael Angelo himself always made his manner serve his thought. We may fail to appreciate his manner and may be incapable of comprehending his thought; but only insincere or conceited critics will venture to gauge the latter by what they feel to be displeasing in the former. What seems lawless in him, follows the law of a profound and peculiar genius, with which, whether we like it or not, we must reckon. His imitators were devoid of thought and too indifferent to question whether there was any law to be obeyed. Like the jackass in the fable, they put on the dead lion's skin of his manner, and brayed beneath it, thinking they could roar.

Correggio, again, though he can hardly be said to have founded a school, was destined to exercise wide and perilous influence over a host of manneristic imitators. Francesco Mazzola, called Il Parmigianino, followed him so closely that his frescoes at Parma are hardly distinguishable from the master's; while Federigo Baroccio at Urbino endeavoured to preserve the sensuous and almost childish sweetness of his style in its integrity.<sup>11</sup> But the real attraction of Correggio was only felt when the new *barocco* architecture called for a new kind of decoration. Every cupola throughout the length and breadth of Italy began then to be painted with rolling clouds and lolling angels. What the wits of Parma had once stigmatised as a *ragott* of frogs, now seemed the only possible expression for celestial ecstasy; and to delineate the joy of heaven upon those multitudes of domes and semi-domes was a point of religious etiquette. False lights, dubious foreshortenings, shallow colourings, ill-studied forms, and motiveless agitation suited the taste that cared for gaudy brightness and sensational effects. The painters, for their part, found it convenient to adopt a mannerism that enabled them to conceal the difficult parts of the figure in feather beds of vapour,

<sup>11</sup> Baroccio had great authority at Florence in the seventeenth century, when the cult of Correggio had overspread all Italy.



requiring neither effort of conception nor expenditure of labour on drawing and composition. At the same time, the Caracci made Correggio's style the object of more serious study; and the history of Bolognese painting shows what was to be derived from this master by intelligent and conscientious workmen.

Hitherto, I have had principally to record the errors of artists copying the external qualities of their great predecessors. It is refreshing to turn from the *epigoni* of the so-called Roman school to masters in whom the flame of the Renaissance still burned brightly. Andrea del Sarto, the pupil of Piero di Cosimo, but more nearly related in style to Fra Bartolommeo than to any other of the elder masters, was himself a contemporary of Raphael and Correggio. Yet he must be noticed here; because he gave new qualities to the art of Tuscany, and formed a tradition decisive for the subsequent history of Florentine painting. To make a just estimate of his achievement is a task of no small difficulty. The Italians called him '*il pittore senza errori*,' or the faultless painter. What they meant by this must have been that in all the technical requirements of art, in drawing, composition, handling of fresco and oils, disposition of draperies, and feeling for light and shadow, he was above criticism. As a colourist he went further and produced more beautiful effects than any Florentine before him. His silver-grey harmonies and liquid blendings of hues cool, yet lustrous, have a charm peculiar to himself alone. We find the like nowhere else in Italy. And yet Andrea del Sarto cannot take rank among the greatest Renaissance painters. What he lacked was precisely the most precious gift—inspiration, depth of emotion, energy of thought. We are apt to feel that even his best pictures were designed with a view to solving an æsthetic problem. Very few have the poetic charm belonging to the '*S. John*' of the Pitti or the '*Madonna*' of the Tribune. Beautiful as are many of his types, like the Magdalen in the large picture of the '*Pietà*,'<sup>12</sup> we can never be sure that he will not break the spell by forms of almost vulgar mediocrity. The story that his wife, a worthless woman, sat for his *Madonnas*, and the legends of his working for money to meet pressing needs, seem justified by numbers of his paintings, faulty in their faultlessness and want of spirit. Still, after making these deductions, we must allow that Andrea del Sarto not unworthily represents the golden age at Florence. There is no affectation, no false taste, no trickery in his style. His workmanship is always solid; his hand unerring. If Nature denied him the soul of a poet, and the stern will needed for escaping from the sordid circumstances of his life, she gave him some of the highest qualities a painter can desire—qualities of strength, tranquillity, and thoroughness, that in the decline of the century ceased to exist outside Venice.

Among Del Sarto's followers it will be enough to mention Franciabigio, Vasari's favourite in fresco painting, Rosso de' Rossi, who carried the Florentine manner into France, and Pontormo, the masterly painter of

<sup>12</sup> Pitti Palace.

portraits.<sup>13</sup> In the historical pictures of these men, whether sacred or secular, it is clear how much was done for Florentine art by Fra Bartolommeo and Del Sarto independently of Michael Angelo and Lionardo. Angelo Bronzino, the pupil of Pontormo, is chiefly valuable for his portraits. Hard and cold, yet obviously true to life, they form a gallery of great interest for the historian of Duke Cosimo's reign. His frescoes and allegories illustrate the defects that have been pointed out in those of Raphael's and Buonarroto's imitators.<sup>14</sup> Want of thought and feeling, combined with the presumptuous treatment of colossal and imaginative subjects, renders these compositions inexpressibly chilling. The psychologist, who may have read a poem from Bronzino's pen, will be inclined to wonder how far this barren art was not connected with personal corruption.<sup>15</sup> Such speculations are, however, apt to be misleading.

Siena, after a long period of inactivity, received a fresh impulse at the same time as Florence. Giovanni Antonio Bazzi, or Razzi, called Il Sodoma, was born at Vercelli about 1477. He studied in his youth under Lionardo da Vinci, training his own exquisite sense of natural beauty in that scientific school. From Milan, after a certain interval of time, he removed to Rome, where he became a friend and follower of Raphael. These double influences determined a style that never lost its own originality. With what delicacy and *naïveté*, almost like a second Luini, but with more of humour and sensuousness, he approached historic themes, may be seen in his frescoes at Monte Oliveto.<sup>16</sup> They were executed before his Roman visit, and show the facility of a most graceful improvisatore. One painting representing the 'Temptation of Monks by Dancing Women' carries the melody of fluent lines and the seduction of fair girlish faces into a region of pure poetry. These frescoes are superior to Sodoma's work in the Farnesina. Impressed, as all artists were, by the monumental character of Rome, and fired by Raphael's example, he tried to abandon his sketchy and idyllic style for one of greater majesty and fulness. The delicious freshness of his earlier manner was sacrificed; but his best efforts to produce a grandiose composition ended in a confusion of individually beautiful but ill-assorted motives. Like Luini, Sodoma was never successful in pictures requiring combination and arrangement. He lacked some sense of symmetry and sought to achieve massiveness by crowding figures in a given space. When we compare his group of 'S. Catherine Fainting under the Stigmata' with the medley of agitated forms that make up his picture of the same saint at Tuldo's execution, we see plainly that

<sup>13</sup> Franciabigio's and Rosso's frescoes stand beside Del Sarto's in the atrium of the Annunziata at Florence. Pontormo's portraits of Cosimo and Lorenzo de' Medici in the Uffizzi, though painted from busts and medallions, have a real historical value.

<sup>14</sup> The 'Christ in Limbo' in S. Lorenzo at Florence, and the detestable picture of 'Time, Beauty, Love, and Folly,' in our National Gallery.

<sup>15</sup> *Opere Bulesche*, vol. iii. pp. 39-46.

<sup>16</sup> Near Siena. These pictures are a series of twenty-four subjects from the life of S. Benedict.

he ought to have confined himself to the expression of very simple themes.<sup>17</sup> The former is incomparable for its sweetness; the latter is indistinct and wearying, in spite of many details that adorn it. Gifted with an exquisite feeling for the beauty of the human body, Sodoma excelled himself when he was contented with a single figure. His 'S. Sebastian,' notwithstanding its wan and faded colouring, is still the very best that has been painted.<sup>18</sup> Suffering, refined and spiritual, without contortion or spasm, could not be presented with more pathos in a form of more surpassing loveliness. This is a truly demonic picture in the fascination it exercises and the memory it leaves upon the mind. Part of its unanalysable charm may be due to the bold thought of combining the beauty of a Greek Hylas with the Christian sentiment of martyrdom. Only the Renaissance could have produced a hybrid so successful, because so deeply felt.

Sodoma's influence at Siena, where he lived a picturesque life, delighting in his horses and surrounding himself with strange four-footed pets of all sorts, soon produced a school of worthy masters. Girolamo del Pacchia, Domenico Beccafumi, and Baldassare Peruzzi, though they owed much to the stimulus of his example, followed him in no servile spirit. Indeed, it may be said that Pacchia's paintings in the Oratory of S. Bernardino, though they lacked his siren beauty, are more powerfully composed; while Peruzzi's fresco of 'Augustus and the Sibyl,' in the church of Fontegiusta, has a monumental dignity unknown to Sodoma. Beccafumi is apt to leave the spectator of his paintings cold. From inventive powers so rich and technical excellence so thorough, we demand more than he can give, and are therefore disappointed. His most interesting picture at Siena is the 'Stigmatisation of S. Catherine,' famous for its mastery of graduated whites. Much of the paved work of the Duomo is attributed to his design. Both Beccafumi and Peruzzi felt the cold and manneristic Roman style of rhetoric injuriously.

To mention the remaining schools of Italy in detail would be superfluous. True art still flourished at Ferrara, where Garofalo endeavoured to carry on the Roman manner of Raphael without the necessary strength or ideality, but also without the soulless insincerity of the mannerists. His best quality was colouring, gemlike and rich; but this found little scope for exercise in the dry and laboured style he affected. Dosso Dossi fared better, perhaps through having never experienced the seductions of Rome. His glowing colour and quaint fancy give the attraction of romance to many of his pictures. The 'Circe,' for example, of the Borghese Palace, is worthy to rank with the best Renaissance work. It is perfectly original, not even suggesting the influence of Venice by its deep and lustrous hues. No painting is more fit to illustrate the 'Orlando Innamorato.' Just so, we feel in looking at it, did

<sup>17</sup> In the church of S. Domenico, Siena.

<sup>18</sup> In the Uffizzi. See also Sodoma's 'Sacrifice of Isaac' in the cathedral of Pisa, and the 'Christ Bound to the Pillar' in the Academy at Siena.

Dragontina show herself to Boiardo's fancy. Ariosto's Alcina belongs to a different family of magnificent witches.

Cremona, at this epoch, had a school of painters, influenced almost equally by the Venetians, the Milanese, and the Roman mannerists. The Campi family covered those grave Lombard vaults with stucco, fresco, and gilding in a style only just removed from the *barocco*.<sup>19</sup> Brescia and Bergamo remained within the influence of Venice, producing work of nearly first-rate quality in Moretto, Romanino, and Lorenzo Lotto. Moroni, the pupil of Moretto, was destined to become one of the most powerful character painters of the modern world, and to enrich the studies of historians and artists with a series of portraits impressive by their fidelity to the spirit of the sixteenth century at its conclusion. Venice herself at this period was still producing masterpieces of the genuine Renaissance. But the decline into mannerism, caused by circumstances similar to those of Rome, was not far distant.

It may seem strange to those who have visited the picture galleries of Italy, and have noticed how very large a number of the painters flourished after 1550, that I should have persistently spoken of the last half of the sixteenth century as a period of decadence. This it was, however, in a deep and true sense of the word. The force of the Renaissance was exhausted, and a time of relaxation had to be passed through, before the reaction known as the Counter-Reformation could make itself felt in art. Then, and not till then, a new spiritual impulse produced a new style. This secondary growth of painting began to flourish at Bologna in accordance with fresh laws of taste. Religious sentiments of a different order had to be expressed; society had undergone a change, and the arts were governed by a genuine, if far inferior, inspiration. Meanwhile, the Renaissance, so far as Italy is concerned, was ended.

It is one of the sad features of this subject, that each section has to end in lamentation. Servitude in the sphere of politics; literary feebleness in scholarship; decadence in art:—to shun these conclusions is impossible. He who has undertaken to describe the parabola of a projectile, cannot be satisfied with tracing its gradual rise and determining its culmination. He must follow its spent force, and watch it slowly sink with ever dwindling impetus to earth. Intellectual movements, when we isolate them in a special country, observing the causes that set them in motion and calculating their retarding influences, may, not unreasonably, be compared to the parabola of a projectile. To shrink from studying the decline of mental vigour in Italy upon the close of the Renaissance, would be therefore weak; though the task of tracing the impulse communicated by her previous energy to other nations, and their stirring under a like movement, might be more agreeable.

<sup>19</sup> The church of S. Sigismondo, outside Cremona, is very interesting for the unity of style in its architecture and decoration.

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX I

#### *The Pulpits of Pisa and Ravello*

HAVING tried to characterise Niccola Pisano's relation to early Italian art in the second chapter of this volume, I adverted to the recent doubts which have been thrown by very competent authorities upon Vasari's legend of this master. Messrs. Crowe and Cavalcaselle, while discussing the question of his birthplace and his early training, observe, what is no doubt true, that there are no traces of good sculpture in Pisa antecedent to the Baptistery pulpit of 1260, and remark that for such a phenomenon as the sudden appearance of this masterpiece it is needful to seek some antecedents elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> This leads them to ask whether Niccola did not owe his origin and education to some other part of Italy. Finding at Ravello, near Amalfi, a pulpit sculptured in 1272 by Niccola di Bartolommeo da Foggia, they suggest that a school of stone-carvers may have flourished at Foggia, and that Niccola Pisano, in spite of his signing himself *Pisanus* on the Baptistery pulpit, may have been an Apulian trained in that school. The arguments adduced in favour of that hypothesis are that Niccola's father, though commonly believed to have been Ser Pietro da Siena, was perhaps called Pietro di Apulia,<sup>2</sup> and that meritorious artists certainly existed at Foggia and Trani. Yet the resemblance of style between the pulpits at Ravello [1272] and Pisa [1260], if that indeed exists (whereof hereafter more must be said), might be used to prove that Niccola da Foggia learned his art from Niccola Pisano, instead of the contrary; nor again, supposing the Apulian school to have flourished before 1260, is it inconsistent with the tradition of Niccola's life that he should have learned the sculptor's craft while working in his youth at Naples. For the rest, Messrs. Crowe and Cavalcaselle dismiss the story of Pisano's studying the antique bas-reliefs at Pisa with contempt,<sup>3</sup> but they omit to notice the actual transcripts from those marbles introduced into his first pulpit. Again, they assume that the lunette at Lucca was one of his latest works, giving precedence to the pulpits of Pisa and Siena and the fountain of Perugia. A comparison of style no doubt renders this view plausible; for the

<sup>1</sup> *History of Painting in Italy*, vol. i. chap. iv.

<sup>2</sup> *Loc. cit.* p. 127, note.

<sup>3</sup> *Loc. cit.* p. 127.

lunette at Lucca is superior to any other of Pisano's works as a composition.

The full discussion of these points is rendered impossible by the want of contemporary information, and each student must, therefore, remain contented with his own hypothesis. Yet something can be said with regard to the Ravello pulpit that plays so important a part in the argument of the learned historians of Italian painting. Unless a strong similarity between it and Pisano's pulpits can be proved, their hypothesis carries with it no persuasion.

The pulpit in the cathedral of Ravello is formed like an ambo of the antique type. That is to say, it is a long parallelogram with flat sides, raised upon pillars, and approached by a flight of steps. These steps are enclosed within richly-ornamented walls, and stand distinct from the pulpit; a short bridge connects the two. The six pillars supporting the ambo itself are slender twisted columns with classic capitals. Three rest on lions, three on lionesses, admirably carved in different attitudes. A small projection on the north side of the pulpit sustains an eagle standing on a pillar, and spreading out his wings to bear an open book. On the arch over the entrance to the staircase projects the head of Sigelgaita, wife of Niccola Rufolo, the donor of the pulpit to the church, sculptured in the style of the Roman decadence, between two profile medallions in low relief.<sup>4</sup> The material of the whole is fair white marble, enriched with mosaics, and wrought into beautiful scroll-work of acanthus leaves and other Romanesque adornments. An inscription, '*Ego Magister Nicolaus de Bartholomeo de Foggia Marmorarius hoc opus feci;*' and another, '*Lapsis millenis bis centum bisque trigenis XPI. bisseis annis ab origine plenis;*' indicate the artist's name and the date of the work.

It is difficult to understand how anyone could trace such a resemblance between this rectangular ambo and the hexagonal structure in the Pisan Baptistery as would justify them in asserting both to be the products of the same school. The pulpit of Niccola da Foggia does not materially differ from other ambones in Italy—from several, for instance, in Amalfi and Ravello; while the distinctive features of Niccola Pisano's work—the combination of classically studied bas-reliefs with Gothic principles of construction, the feeling for artistic unity in the composition of groups, the mastery over plastic form, and the detached allegorical figures—are noticeable only by their total absence from it. What is left by way of similarity is a sculpturesque refinement in Sigelgaita's portrait, not unworthy of Pisano's own chisel. This, however, is but a slender point whereon to base so large a pyramid of pure conjecture. Surely we must look elsewhere than at Ravello or at Foggia for the origin of Niccola Pisano.

Why then should we reject tradition in this instance? Messrs. Crowe

<sup>4</sup> Mr. Perkins, following the suggestion of Panza, in his *Istoria dell' Antica Repubblica d'Amalfi*, is inclined to think that this head represents, not Sigelgaita, but Joanna II. of Naples, and is therefore more than a century later in date than the pulpit. See *Italian Sculptors*, p. 51.

and Cavalcaselle reply; because the sculpture of no Tuscan city before his period is good enough to have led up to him. Yet this may be contested; and at all events it will not be easy to prove from the Ravello head of Sigelgaita that a more advanced school existed in the south. The fact is that the art of the stone-carvers or *marmorarii* had never entirely died out since the days of Roman greatness; nor was Niccola without respectable predecessors in the very town of Lucca, where he produced the first masterpiece of modern sculpture. The circular font of S. Ferdiano, for example, carved with figures in high relief by a certain Robertus of the twelfth century, combines the Romanesque mannerism with the *naïveté* of mediæval fancy. I might point in particular to two knights seated on one horse in what I take to be the company of Pharaoh crossing the Red Sea, as an instance of a successful attempt to escape from the formalism of a decayed style. At the same time the general effect of the embossed work of this font is fine; nor do we fail to perceive that the artist retained some portion of the classic feeling for grandiose and monumental composition. Far less noteworthy, yet still not utterly despicable, is the bas-relief of Biduinus over the side-door of S. Salvatore at Lucca. What Niccola added of indefeasibly his own to the style of these continuators of a dead tradition, was feeling for the beauty of classical work in a good age, and through that feeling a more perfect sympathy with nature. It is just at this point that the old tale about the sarcophagus of the Countess Beatrice conveys not only the letter but the spirit of the fact. Niccola's genius, no less vivid and life-giving than that of Giotto, infused into the hard and formal manner of his immediate predecessors true nature and true art. Between the bas-relief of S. Salvatore and the bas-relief over the north door of the Duomo at Lucca, there is indeed a broad gulf, yet such as might have been passed at one bound by a master into whose soul the beauty of a fragment of Greek art had sunk, and who had received at his birth the gift of a creative genius.



## APPENDIX II

### *Michael Angelo's Sonnets*

AFTER the death of Michael Angelo, the manuscripts of his sonnets, madrigals, and other poems, written at various periods of his life, and well known to his intimate friends, passed into the hands of his nephew, Lionardo Buonarroti. From Lionardo they descended to his son, Michael Angelo, who was himself a poet of some mark. This grand-nephew of the sculptor prepared them for the press, and gave them to the world in 1623. On his redaction the commonly received version of the poems rested until 1863, when Signor Cesare Guasti of Florence, having gained access to the original manuscripts, published a critical edition, preserving every peculiarity of the autograph, and adding a prose paraphrase for the explanation of the text.

The younger Michael Angelo, working in an age of literary pedantry and moral prudery, fancied that it was his duty to refine the style of his great ancestor, and to remove allusions open to ignorant misconstruction. Instead, therefore, of giving an exact transcript of the original poems, he set himself to soften down their harshness, to clear away their obscurity, to amplify, transpose, and mutilate according to his own ideas of syntax, taste, and rhetoric. On the Dantesque ruggedness of Michael Angelo he engrafted the prettiness of the seventeenth Petrarchisti; and where he thought the morality of the poems was questionable, especially in the case of those addressed to Cavalieri, he did not hesitate to introduce such alterations as destroyed their obvious intention. In order to understand the effect of this method, it is only necessary to compare the autograph as printed by Guasti with the version of 1623. In Sonnet xxxi., for example, the two copies agree in only one line, while the remaining thirteen are distorted and adorned with superfluous conceits by the over-scrupulous but not too conscientious editor of 1623.<sup>1</sup>

Michael Angelo's poems, even after his grand-nephew had tried to reduce them to lucidity and order, have always been considered obscure and crabbed. Nor can it be pretended that they gain in smoothness and clearness by the restoration of the true readings. On the contrary, instances of defective grammar, harsh elisions, strained metaphors, and incomplete expressions are multiplied. The difficulty of comprehending the sense is rather increased than diminished, and the obstacles to a

<sup>1</sup> See Guasti's *Rime di Michel Agnolo Buonarrote*, Firenze, 1863, p. 189. The future references will be made to that edition.

translator become still more insurmountable than Wordsworth found them.<sup>2</sup> This being undoubtedly the case, the value of Guasti's edition for students of Michael Angelo is nevertheless inestimable. We read now for the first time what the greatest man of the sixteenth century actually wrote, and are able to enter, without the interference of a fictitious veil, into the shrine of his own thought and feeling. His sonnets form the best commentary on Michael Angelo's solitary life and on his sublime ideal of art. This reflection has guided me in the choice of those now offered in English, as an illustration of the chapter in this volume devoted to their author's biography.

Though the dates of Michael Angelo's compositions are conjectural, it may be assumed that the two sonnets on Dante were written when he was himself in exile. We know that, while sojourning in the house of Gian Francesco Aldovrandini at Bologna, he used to spend a portion of his time in reading Dante aloud to his protector,<sup>3</sup> and the indignation expressed against Florence, then as ever fickle and ungrateful, the *gente avara, invidiosa, e superba*, to use Dante's own words, seems proper to a period of just resentment. Still there is no certainty that they belong to 1495; for throughout his long life Michael Angelo was occupied with Dante. A story told of him in 1506, together with the dialogues reported by Donato Giannotti, prove that he was regarded by his fellow-citizens as an authority upon the meaning of the 'Divine Comedy.'<sup>4</sup> In 1518, when the Florentine Academy petitioned Leo X. to transport the bones of Dante from Ravenna to Florence, Michael Angelo subscribed the document and offered to erect a statue worthy of the poet.<sup>5</sup> How deeply the study of Dante influenced his art, appears not only in the lower part of the 'Last Judgment:' we feel that source of stern and lofty inspiration in his style at large; nor can we reckon what the world lost when his volume of drawings in illustration of the 'Divine Comedy' perished at sea.<sup>6</sup> The two following sonnets, therefore, whenever written, may be taken as expressing his settled feeling about the first and greatest of Italian poets:<sup>7</sup>—

DAL CIEL DISCESE

From heaven his spirit came, and robed in clay  
The realms of justice and of mercy trod,  
Then rose a living man to gaze on God,  
That he might make the truth as clear as day.

<sup>2</sup> 'I can translate, and have translated, two books of Ariosto at the rate nearly of one hundred lines a day; but so much meaning has been put by Michael Angelo into so little room, and that meaning sometimes so excellent in itself, that I found the difficulty of translating him insurmountable.'—Note to Wordsworth's English version of some sonnets of Michael Angelo.

<sup>3</sup> See above, p. 765.

<sup>4</sup> See Gotti's Life, p. 48, and Giannotti's works (Firenze, Le Monnier, 1850), quoted by Gotti, pp. 249-257.

<sup>5</sup> See Appendix to Gotti's Life, No. 25.

<sup>6</sup> See Gotti's Life, p. 256.

<sup>7</sup> Guasti, pp. 153-155.

For that pure star that brightened with his ray  
 The ill-deserving nest where I was born,  
 The whole wide world would be a prize to scorn;  
 None but his Maker can due guerdon pay.

I speak of Dante, whose high work remains  
 Unknown, unhonoured by that thankless brood,  
 Who only to just men deny their wage.  
 Were I but he! Born for like lingering pains,  
 Against his exile coupled with his good  
 I'd gladly change the world's best heritage!

## QUANTE DIRNI SI DE'

No tongue can tell of him what should be told,  
 For on blind eyes his splendour shines too strong;  
 'Twere easier to blame those who wrought him wrong,  
 Than sound his least praise with a mouth of gold.  
 He to explore the place of pain was bold,  
 Then soared to God, to teach our souls by song;  
 The gates heaven oped to bear his feet along,  
 Against his just desire his country rolled.

Thankless I call her, and to her own pain  
 The nurse of fell mischance; for sign take this,  
 That ever to the best she deals more scorn:  
 Among a thousand proofs let one remain;  
 Though ne'er was fortune more unjust than his,  
 His equal or his better ne'er was born.

About the date of the two next sonnets there is less doubt. The first was clearly written when Michael Angelo was smarting under a sense of the ill-treatment he received from Julius. The second, composed at Rome, is interesting as the only proof we possess of the impression made upon his mind by the anomalies of the Papal rule. Here, in the capital of Christendom, he writes, holy things are sold for money to be used in warfare, and the pontiff, *quel nel manto*, paralyses the powers of the sculptor by refusing him employment.<sup>8</sup>

## SIGNOR, SE VERO È

My Lord! if ever ancient saw spake sooth,  
 Hear this which saith: Who can, doth never will.  
 Lo! thou hast lent thine ear to fables still,  
 Rewarding those who hate the name of truth.  
 I am thy drudge and have been from my youth—  
 Thine, like the rays which the sun's circle fill;  
 Yet of my dear time's waste thou think'st no ill:  
 The more I toil, the less I move thy ruth.

Once 'twas my hope to raise me by thy height;  
 But 'tis the balance and the powerful sword  
 Of Justice, not false Echo, that we need.  
 Heaven, as it seems, plants virtue in despite  
 Here on the earth, if this be our reward—  
 To seek for fruit on trees too dry to breed.

<sup>8</sup> Guasti, pp. 156, 157.

## QUA SI FA ELMI

Here helms and swords are made of chalices:  
 The blood of Christ is sold so much the quart:  
 His cross and thorns are spears and shields; and short  
 Must be the time ere even His patience cease.  
 Nay let Him come no more to raise the fees  
 Of fraud and sacrilege beyond report!  
 For Rome still slays and sells Him at the court,  
 Where paths are closed to virtue's fair increase.

Now were fit time for me to scrape a treasure,  
 Seeing that work and gain are gone; while he  
 Who wears the robe, is my Medusa still.  
 Perchance in heaven poverty is a pleasure:  
 But of that better life what hope have we,  
 When the blessed banner leads to nought but ill?

A third sonnet of this period is intended to be half burlesque, and, therefore, is composed *a coda*, as the Italians describe the lengthened form of the conclusion. It was written while Michael Angelo was painting the roof of the Sistine, and was sent to his friend Giovanni da Pistoja. The effect of this work, as Vasari tells us, on his eyesight was so injurious, that, for some time after its completion, he could only read by placing the book or manuscript above his head and looking up.<sup>9</sup>

## I' HO GIÀ FATTO UN GOZZO

I've grown a goitre by dwelling in this den—  
 As cats from stagnant streams in Lombardy,  
 Or in what other land they hap to be—  
 Which drives the belly close beneath the chin:  
 My beard turns up to heaven; my nape falls in,  
 Fixed on my spine: my breast-bone visibly  
 Grows like a harp: a rich embroidery  
 Bedews my face from brush-drops thick and thin.  
 My loins into my paunch like levers grind;  
 My buttock like a crupper bears my weight;  
 My feet unguided wander to and fro;

In front my skin grows loose and long; behind,  
 By bending it becomes more taut and strait;  
 Backward I strain me like a Syrian bow:  
 Whence false and quaint, I know,  
 Must be the fruit of squinting brain and eye;  
 For ill can aim the gun that bends awry.  
 Come then, Giovanni, try  
 To succour my dead pictures and my fame;  
 Since foul I fare and painting is my shame.

The majority of the sonnets are devoted to love and beauty, conceived in the spirit of exalted Platonism. They are supposed to have been written in the latter period of his life, when he was about sixty years of age; and though we do not know for certain to whom they were in every case addressed, they may be used in confirmation of what

<sup>9</sup> Guasti, p. 158.

I have said about his admiration for Vittoria Colonna and Tommaso Cavalieri.<sup>10</sup> The following, with its somewhat obscure adaptation of a Platonic theory of creation to his own art, was probably composed soon after Vittoria Colonna's death.<sup>11</sup>

## SE 'L MIO ROZZO MARTELLO

When my rude hammer to the stubborn stone  
 Gives human shape, now that, now this, at will,  
 Following his hand who wields and guides it still,  
 It moves upon another's feet alone.  
 But He who dwells in heaven all things doth fill  
 With beauty by pure motions of his own;  
 And since tools fashion tools which else were none,  
 His life makes all that lives with living skill.  
 Now, for that every stroke excels the more  
 The closer to the forge it still ascend,  
 Her soul that quickened mine hath sought the skies:  
 Wherefore I find my toil will never end,  
 If God, the great artificer, denies  
 That tool which was my only aid before.

The next is peculiarly valuable, as proving with what intense and religious fervour Michael Angelo addressed himself to the worship of intellectual beauty. He alone, in that age of sensuality and animalism, pierced through the form of flesh and sought the divine idea it imprisoned:<sup>12</sup>—

## PER RITORNAR LÀ

As one who will reseek her home of light,  
 Thy form immortal to this prison-house  
 Descended, like an angel piteous,  
 To heal all hearts and make the whole world bright.  
 'Tis this that thralls my heart in love's delight,  
 Not thy clear face of beauty glorious;  
 For he who harbours virtue, still will choose  
 To love what neither years nor death can blight.  
 So fares it ever with things high and rare,  
 Wrought in the sweat of nature; heaven above  
 Showers on their birth the blessings of her prime;  
 Nor hath God deigned to show Himself elsewhere  
 More clearly than in human forms sublime;  
 Which, since they image Him, compel my love.

The same Platonic theme is slightly varied in the two following sonnets:<sup>13</sup>—

## SPIRITO BEN NATO

Choice soul, in whom, as in a glass, we see,  
 Mirrored in thy pure form and delicate,  
 What beauties heaven and nature can create,  
 The paragon of all their works to be!

<sup>10</sup> See above, pp. 785-786.

<sup>11</sup> Guasti, p. 226.

<sup>12</sup> Guasti, p. 218.

<sup>13</sup> *Ib.* pp. 182, 210.

Fair soul, in whom love, pity, piety,  
 Have found a home, as from thy outward state  
 We clearly read, and are so rare and great  
 That they adorn none other like to thee!

Love takes me captive; beauty binds my soul;  
 Pity and mercy with their gentle eyes  
 Wake in my heart a hope that cannot cheat.  
 What law, what destiny, what fell control,  
 What cruelty, or late or soon, denies  
 That death should spare perfection so complete?

## DAL DOLCE PIANTO

From sweet laments to bitter joys, from peace  
 Eternal to a brief and hollow truce,  
 How have I fallen!—when 'tis truth we lose,  
 Mere sense survives our reason's dear decease.  
 I know not if my heart bred this disease,  
 That still more pleasing grows with growing use;  
 Or else thy face, thine eyes, in which the hues  
 And fires of Paradise dart ecstasies.

Thy beauty is no mortal thing; 'twas sent  
 From heaven on high to make our earth divine:  
 Wherefore, though wasting, burning, I'm content;  
 For in thy sight what could I do but pine?  
 If God Himself thus rules my destiny,  
 Who, when I die, can lay the blame on thee?

The next is saddened by old age and death. Love has yielded to piety, and is only remembered as what used to be. Yet in form and feeling this is quite one of the most beautiful in the series supposed to refer to Vittoria Colonna:<sup>14</sup>—

## TORNAMI AL TEMPO

Bring back the time when blind desire ran free,  
 With bit and rein too loose to curb his flight;  
 Give back the buried face, once angel-bright,  
 That hides in earth all comely things from me;  
 Bring back those journeys ta'en so toilsomely,  
 So toilsome-slow to him whose hairs are white;  
 Those tears and flames that in one breast unite;  
 If thou wilt once more take thy fill of me!

Yet Love! Suppose it true that thou dost thrive  
 Only on bitter honey-dews of tears,  
 Small profit hast thou of a weak old man.  
 My soul that toward the other shore doth strive,  
 Wards off thy darts with shafts of holier fears;  
 And fire feeds ill on brands no breath can fan.

After this it only remains to quote the celebrated sonnet used by Varchi for his dissertation, the best known of all Michael Angelo's

<sup>14</sup> Guasti, p. 212.

poems.<sup>15</sup> The thought is this: just as a sculptor hews from a block of marble the form that lies concealed within, so the lover has to extract from his lady's heart the life or death of his soul.

## NON HA L'OTTIMO ARTISTA

The best of artists hath no thought to show  
Which the rough stone in its superfluous shell  
Doth not include: to break the marble spell  
Is all the hand that serves the brain can do.  
The ill I shun, the good I seek, even so  
In thee, fair lady, proud, ineffable,  
Lies hidden: but the art I wield so well  
Works adverse to my wish, and lays me low.

Therefore not love, nor thy transcendent face,  
Nor cruelty, nor fortune, nor disdain,  
Cause my mischance, nor fate, nor destiny;  
Since in thy heart thou carriest death and grace  
Enclosed together, and my worthless brain  
Can draw forth only death to feed on me.

The fire of youth was not extinct, we feel, after reading these last sonnets. There is, indeed, an almost pathetic intensity of passion in the recurrence of Michael Angelo's thoughts to a sublime love on the verge of the grave. Not less important in their bearing on his state of feeling are the sonnets addressed to Cavalieri; and though his modern editor shrinks from putting a literal interpretation upon them, I am convinced that we must accept them simply as an expression of the artist's homage for the worth and beauty of an excellent young man. The two sonnets I intend to quote next<sup>16</sup> were written, according to Varchi's direct testimony, for Tommaso Cavalieri, 'in whom'—the words are Varchi's—'I discovered, besides incomparable personal beauty, so much charm of nature, such excellent abilities, and such a graceful manner, that he deserved, and still deserves, to be the better loved the more he is known.' The play of words upon Cavalieri's name in the last line of the first sonnet, the evidence of Varchi, and the indirect witness of Condivi, together with Michael Angelo's own letters,<sup>17</sup> are sufficient in my judgment to warrant the explanation I have given above. Nor do I think that the doubts expressed by Guasti about the intention of the sonnets,<sup>18</sup> or Gotti's curious theory that the letters, though addressed to Cavalieri, were meant for Vittoria Colonna,<sup>19</sup> are much more honourable to Michael Angelo's reputation than the garbling process whereby the verses were rendered unintelligible in the edition of 1623.

<sup>15</sup> Delivered before the Florentine Academy in 1546. See Guasti, p. 173, for the sonnet, and p. lxxv. for the dissertation. See also Gotti, p. 249, for Michael Angelo's remarks upon the latter.

<sup>16</sup> Guasti, pp. 189, 188.

<sup>17</sup> See *Archivio Buonarroti*; and above, p. 786, note 56.

<sup>18</sup> *Rime*, p. xlv.

<sup>19</sup> Gotti's *Life*, pp. 231-233.



## A CHE PIÙ DEBB' IO

Why should I seek to ease intense desire  
 With still more tears and windy words of grief,  
 When heaven, or late or soon, sends no relief  
 To souls whom love hath robed around with fire?  
 Why need my aching heart to death aspire  
 When all must die? Nay, death beyond belief  
 Unto these eyes would be both sweet and brief,  
 Since in my sum of woes all joys expire!

Therefore because I cannot shun the blow  
 I rather seek, say who must rule my breast,  
 Gliding between her gladness and her woe?  
 If only chains and hands can make me blest,  
 No marvel if alone and bare I go  
 An armed Knight's captive and slave confessed.

## VEGGIO CO' BEI VOSTRI OCCHI

With your fair eyes a charming light I see,  
 For which my own blind eyes would peer in vain;  
 Stayed by your feet the burden I sustain  
 Which my lame feet find all too strong for me;  
 Wingless upon your pinions forth I fly;  
 Heavenward your spirit stirreth me to strain;  
 E'en as you will, I blush and blanch again,  
 Freeze in the sun, burn 'neath a frosty sky.

Your will includes and is the lord of mine;  
 Life to my thoughts within your heart is given;  
 My words begin to breathe upon your breath:  
 Like to the moon am I, that cannot shine  
 Alone; for lo! our eyes see nought in heaven  
 Save what the living sun illumineth.

Whether we are justified in assigning the following pair to the Cavalieri series is more doubtful. They seem, however, to proceed from a similar mood of the poet's mind.<sup>20</sup>

## S'UN CASTO AMOR

If love be chaste, if virtue conquer ill,  
 If fortune bind both lovers in one bond,  
 If either at the other's grief despond,  
 If both be governed by one life, one will;  
 If in two bodies one soul triumph still,  
 Raising the twain from earth to heaven beyond,  
 If love with one blow and one golden wand  
 Have power both smitten breasts to pierce and thrill;

If each the other love, himself foregoing,  
 With such delight, such savour, and so well,  
 That both to one sole end their wills combine;  
 If thousands of these thoughts all thought outgoing  
 Fail the least part of their firm love to tell;  
 Say, can mere angry spite this knot untwine?

<sup>20</sup> Guasti, pp. 190-202.

## COLUI CHE FECE

He who ordained, when first the world began,  
 Time that was not before creation's hour,  
 Divided it, and gave the sun's high power  
 To rule the one, the moon the other span:  
 Thence fate and changeeful chance and fortune's ban  
 Did in one moment down on mortals shower:  
 To me they portioned darkness for a dower;  
 Dark hath my lot been since I was a man.

Myself am ever mine own counterfeit;  
 And as deep night grows still more dim and dun,  
 So still of more mis-doing must I rue:  
 Meanwhile this solace to my soul is sweet,  
 That my black night doth make more clear the sun  
 Which at your birth was given to wait on you.

A sonnet written for Luigi del Riccio, on the death of his friend Cecchino Bracci, is curious on account of its conceit.<sup>21</sup> Michael Angelo says: 'Cecchino, whom you loved, is dead; and if I am to make his portrait, I can only do so by drawing you, in whom he still lives.' Here, again, we trace the Platonic conception of love as nothing if not spiritual, and of beauty as a form that finds its immortality within the lover's soul. This Cecchino was a boy who died at the age of seventeen. Michael Angelo wrote his epicedion in several centuries of verses, distributed among his friends in the form of what he terms *polizzini*, as though they were trifles.

## A PENA PRIMA

Scarce had I seen for the first time his eyes  
 Which to thy living eyes are life and light,  
 When closed at last in death's injurious night  
 He opened them on God in Paradise.  
 I know it and I weep, too late made wise:  
 Yet was the fault not mine; for death's fell spite  
 Robbed my desire of that supreme delight,  
 Which in thy better memory never dies.

Therefore, Luigi, if the task be mine  
 To make unique Cecchino smile in stone  
 For ever, now that earth hath made him dim,  
 If the beloved within the lover shine,  
 Since art without him cannot work alone  
 Thee must I carve to tell the world of him.

In contrast with the philosophical obscurity of many of the sonnets hitherto quoted, I place the following address to Night—one, certainly, of Michael Angelo's most beautiful and characteristic compositions, as it is also the most transparent in style<sup>22</sup>:—

## O NOTT', O DOLCE TEMPO

O night, O sweet though sombre span of time!—  
 All things find rest upon their journey's end—

<sup>21</sup> *Ib.* p. 162.

<sup>22</sup> Guasti, p. 205.

Whoso hath praised thee, well doth apprehend;  
 And whoso honours thee, hath wisdom's prime.  
 Our cares thou canst to quietude sublime,  
 For dews and darkness are of peace the friend;  
 Often by thee in dreams upborne I wend  
 From earth to heaven, where yet I hope to climb.

Thou shade of Death, through whom the soul at length  
 Shuns pain and sadness hostile to the heart,  
 Whom mourners find their last and sure relief!  
 Thou dost restore our suffering flesh to strength,  
 Driest our tears, assuagest every smart,  
 Purgings the spirits of the pure from grief.

The religious sonnets have been reserved to the last. These were composed in old age, when the early impressions of Savonarola's teaching revived, and when Michael Angelo had grown to regard even his art and the beauty he had loved so purely, as a snare. If we did not bear in mind the piety expressed throughout his correspondence, their ascetic tone, and the remorse they seem to indicate, would convey a painful sense of cheerlessness and disappointment. As it is, they strike me as the natural utterance of a profoundly devout and somewhat melancholy man, in whom religion has survived all other interests, and who, reviewing his past life of fame and toil, finds that the sole reality is God. The two first of these compositions are addressed to Giorgio Vasari.<sup>23</sup>

## GIUNTO È GIÀ

Now hath my life across a stormy sea  
 Like a frail bark reached that wide port where all  
 Are bidden ere the final judgment fall,  
 Of good or evil deeds to pay the fee.  
 Now know I well how that fond phantasy  
 Which made my soul the worshipper and thrall  
 Of earthly art, is vain; how criminal  
 Is that which all men seek unwillingly.

Those amorous thoughts which were so lightly dressed,  
 What are they when the double death is nigh?  
 The one I know for sure, the other dread.  
 Painting nor sculpture now can lull to rest  
 My soul that turns to His great love on high,  
 Whose arms to clasp us on the cross were spread.

## LE FAVOLE DEL MONDO

The fables of the world have filched away  
 The time I had for thinking upon God;  
 His grace lies buried deep 'neath oblivion's sod,  
 Whence springs an evil-crop of sins alway.  
 What makes another wise, leads me astray,  
 Slow to discern the bad path I have trod:  
 Hope fades; but still desire ascends that God  
 May free me from self-love, my sure decay.

<sup>23</sup> Guasti, pp. 230-232.

Shorten half-way my road to heaven from earth?  
 Dear Lord, I cannot even half-way rise,  
 Unless Thou help me on this pilgrimage:  
 Teach me to hate the world so little worth,  
 And all the lovely things I once did prize;  
 That endless life, not death, may be my wage.

The same note is struck in the following, which breathes the spirit of a Penitential Psalm:<sup>24</sup>—

## CARICO D' ANNI

Burdened with years and full of sinfulness,  
 With evil custom grown inveterate,  
 Both deaths I dread that close before me wait,  
 Yet feed my heart on poisonous thoughts no less.  
 No strength I find in mine own feebleness  
 To change or life or love or use or fate,  
 Unless Thy heavenly guidance come, though late,  
 Which only helps and stays our nothingness.

'Tis not enough, dear Lord, to make me yearn  
 For that celestial home, where yet my soul  
 May be new made, and not, as erst, of nought:  
 Nay, ere Thou strip her mortal vestment, turn  
 My steps toward the steep ascent, that whole  
 And pure before Thy face she may be brought.

In reading the two next, we may remember that, at the end of his life, Michael Angelo was occupied with designs for a picture of the Crucifixion, which he never executed, though he gave a drawing of Christ upon the cross to Vittoria Colonna; and that his last work in marble was the unfinished 'Pietà' in the Duomo at Florence.<sup>25</sup>

## SCARCO D' UN IMPORTUNA

Freed from a burden sore and grievous band,  
 Dear Lord, and from this wearying world untied,  
 Like a frail bark I turn me to Thy side,  
 As from a fierce storm to a tranquil land.  
 Thy thorns, Thy nails, and either bleeding hand,  
 With Thy mild gentle piteous face, provide  
 Promise of help and mercies multiplied,  
 And hope that yet my soul secure may stand.

Let not Thy holy eyes be just to see  
 My evil past, Thy chastened ears to hear  
 And stretch the arm of judgment to my crime:  
 Let Thy blood only lave and succour me,  
 Yielding more perfect pardon, better cheer  
 As older still I grow with lengthening time.

<sup>24</sup> Guasti, pp. 244, 245.

<sup>25</sup> *Ib.* pp. 241-245.

## NON FUR MEN LIETI

Not less elate than smitten with wild woe  
 To see not them but Thee by death undone,  
 Were those blest souls, when Thou above the sun  
 Didst raise, by dying, men that lay so low:  
 Elate, since freedom from all ills that flow  
 From their first fault for Adam's race was won;  
 Sore smitten, since in torment fierce God's son  
 Served servants on the cruel cross below.

Heaven showed she knew Thee, who Thou wert and whence,  
 Veiling her eyes above the riven earth;  
 The mountains trembled and the seas were troubled:  
 He took the Fathers from hell's darkness dense:  
 The torments of the damned fiends redoubled:  
 Man only joyed, who gained baptismal birth.

The collection of his poems is closed with yet another sonnet in the same lofty strain of prayer, and faith, and hope in God.<sup>26</sup>

## MENTRE M' ATTRISTA

Mid weariness and woe I find some cheer  
 In thinking of the past, when I recall  
 My weakness and my sins and reckon all  
 The vain expense of days that disappear:  
 This cheers by making, ere I die, more clear  
 The frailty of what men delight miscall;  
 But saddens me to think how rarely fall  
 God's grace and mercies in life's latest year.

For though Thy promises our faith compel,  
 Yet, Lord, what man shall venture to maintain  
 That pity will condone our long neglect?  
 Still, from Thy blood poured forth we know full well  
 How without measure was Thy martyr's pain,  
 How measureless the gifts we dare expect.

From the thought of Dante, through Plato, to the thought of Christ: so our study of Michael Angelo's sonnets has carried us. In communion with these highest souls Michael Angelo habitually lived; for he was born of their lineage, and was like them a life-long alien on the earth.

<sup>26</sup> Guasti, p. 246.

### APPENDIX III

#### *Chronological Tables of the Principal Artists mentioned in this Volume*

THE lists which follow have been drawn up with a view to assisting the reader of my chapters on Architecture, Sculpture, and Painting. I have only included the more prominent names; and these I have placed in the order of their occurrence in the foregoing pages. In compiling them, I have consulted the Index to Le Monnier's edition of Vasari (1870), Crowe and Cavalcaselle's 'History of Painting,' and Milizia's 'Dictionary of Architects.'

#### ARCHITECTS

Name	Born	Died	Page
Arnolfo di Cambio.....	1240	1311	616
Giotto di Bondone.....	1276	1337	617
Andrea Orcagna.....	—	about 1369	617
Filippo Brunelleschi.....	1377	1446	621
Leo Battista Alberti.....	1405	1472	622
Michelozzo Michelozzi.....	1391	1472	623
Benedetto da Majano.....	1442	1497	623
Giuliano di San Gallo.....	1445	1516	623
Antonio di San Gallo.....	1455	1534 ?	623
Antonio Filarete.....	—	1465 ?	623
Bramante Lazzari.....	1444	1514	625
Cristoforo Rocchi.....	—	—	626
Ventura Vitoni.....	—	—	626
Raffaello Santi.....	1483	1520	626
Giulio Romano.....	1499	1546	626
Baldassare Peruzzi.....	1481	1536	627
Jacopo Sansovino.....	1477	1570	627
Michele Sanmicheli.....	1484	1559	627
Baccio d'Agnolo.....	1462	1543	627
Michael Angelo Buonarroti.....	1475	1564	627
Andrea Palladio.....	1518	1580	632
Giacomo Barozzi.....	1507	1573	632
Vincenzo Scamozzi.....	1552	1616	632
Galeazzo Alessi.....	1500	1572	632
Bartolommeo Ammanati.....	1511	1592	632

## SCULPTORS

Name	Born	Died	Page
Niccola Pisano.....	after 1200	1278	634
Giovanni Pisano.....	about 1240	1320	639
Lorenzo Maitani.....	—	1330	641
Andrea Pisano.....	about 1273	about 1349	642
Giotto di Bondone.....	1276	1337	643
Nino Pisano.....	—	about 1360	644
Giovanni Balduccio.....	about 1300	about 1347	644
Filippo Calendario.....	—	1355	644
Andrea Orcagna.....	—	about 1369	645
Lorenzo Ghiberti.....	1378	1455	646
Giacomo della Quercia.....	1374	1438	646
Filippo Brunelleschi.....	1377	1446	646
Donatello.....	1386	1466	650
Andrea Verocchio.....	1435	1488	652
Alessandro Leopardi.....	—	after 1522	653
Antonio Pollajuolo.....	1429	1498	654
Piero Pollajuolo.....	1441	1489 ?	655
Luca della Robbia.....	1400	1482	655
Agostino di Duccio.....	—	after 1461	656
Antonio Rossellino.....	1427	1478 ?	657
Matteo Civitali.....	1435	1501	659
Mino da Fiesole.....	1431	1484	659
Desiderio da Settignano.....	1428	1464	660
Guido Mazzoni.....	—	1518	662
Antonio Begarelli.....	1479	about 1565	662
Antonio Amadeo.....	1447 ?	about 1520	662
Andrea Contucci.....	1460	1529	663
Jacopo Sansovino.....	1477	1570	664
Michael Angelo Buonarroti.....	1475	1564	666
Raffaello da Montelupo.....	1505	1567	666
Giovanni Angelo Montorsoli.....	1507	1563	666
Baccio Bandinelli.....	1493	1560	666
Bartolommeo Ammanati.....	1511	1592	666
Benvenuto Cellini.....	1500	1571	667
Gian Bologna.....	1524	1608	667

## PAINTERS

Name	Born	Died	Page
Giovanni Cimabue.....	1240 ?	1302 ?	673
Giotto di Bondone.....	1276	1337	674
Andrea Orcagna.....	—	about 1369	678
Ambrogio Lorenzetti.....	—	about 1348	679
Pietro Lorenzetti.....	—	about 1350	679
Taddeo Gaddi.....	about 1300	1366	681
Francesco Traini.....	—	after 1378	682
Duccio di Buoninsegna.....	—	about 1320	686
Simone Martini.....	1285 ?	1344	686



PAINTERS—*continued*

Name	Born	Died	Page
Taddeo di Bartolo.....	about 1362	1422	687
Spinello Aretino.....	—	1410	687
Masolino da Panicale.....	1384	1447 ?	692
Masaccio.....	1402	1429	692
Paolo Uccello.....	1397	1475	693
Andrea del Castagno.....	1396	1457	694
Piero della Francesca.....	1420 ?	1506 ?	694
Melozzo da Forlì.....	about 1438	1494	695
Francesco Squarcione.....	1394	1474	695
Gentile da Fabriano.....	about 1370	about 1450	696
Fra Angelico.....	1387	1455	696
Benozzo Gozzoli.....	1420	1498	697
Lippo Lippi.....	1412 ?	1469	699
Filippino Lippi.....	1457	1504	700
Sandro Botticelli.....	1447	1510	701
Piero di Cosimo.....	1462	1521 ?	704
Domenico Ghirlandajo.....	1449	before 1498	705
Andrea Mantegna.....	1431	1506	710
Luca Signorelli.....	about 1441	1523	714
Pietro Perugino.....	1446	1524	721
Bernardo Pinturicchio.....	1454	1513	725
Francesco Francia.....	1450	1517	725
Fra Bartolommeo.....	1475	1517	726
Mariotto Albertinelli.....	1474	1515	726
Lionardo da Vinci.....	1452	1519	729
Raffaello Santi.....	1483	1520	737
Antonio Allegri da Correggio.....	1494 ?	1534	742
Michael Angelo Buonarroti.....	1475	1564	743
Bartolommeo Vivarini.....	—	after 1499	752
Jacopo Bellini.....	1400 ?	1464 ?	753
Gentile Bellini.....	1426	1507	753
Vittore Carpaccio.....	—	after 1519	753
Giovanni Bellini.....	1427	1516	754
Giorgione.....	1478	1511	754
Tiziano Vecelli.....	1477	1576	756
Paolo Veronese.....	1530	1588	756
Tintoretto.....	1512	1594	756
Giovanni Antonio Beltraffio.....	1467	1516	808
Marco d' Oggiono.....	about 1470	1530	808
Cesare da Sesto.....	—	about 1524	808
Bernardino Luini.....	about 1460	after 1530	808
Gaudenzio Ferrari.....	1484	1549	810
Giulio Romano.....	1499	1546	811
Giovanni da Udine.....	1487	1564	811
Perino del Vaga.....	1499	1547	811
Marcello Venusti.....	—	about 1584	812
Sebastian del Piombo.....	1485	1547	812
Daniele da Volterra.....	about 1509	1566	812
Il Parmigianino.....	1504	1540	813
Federigo Baroccio.....	1528	1612	813
Andrea del Sarto.....	1487	1531	814
Jacopo Pontormo.....	1494	1557	814

PAINTERS—*continued*

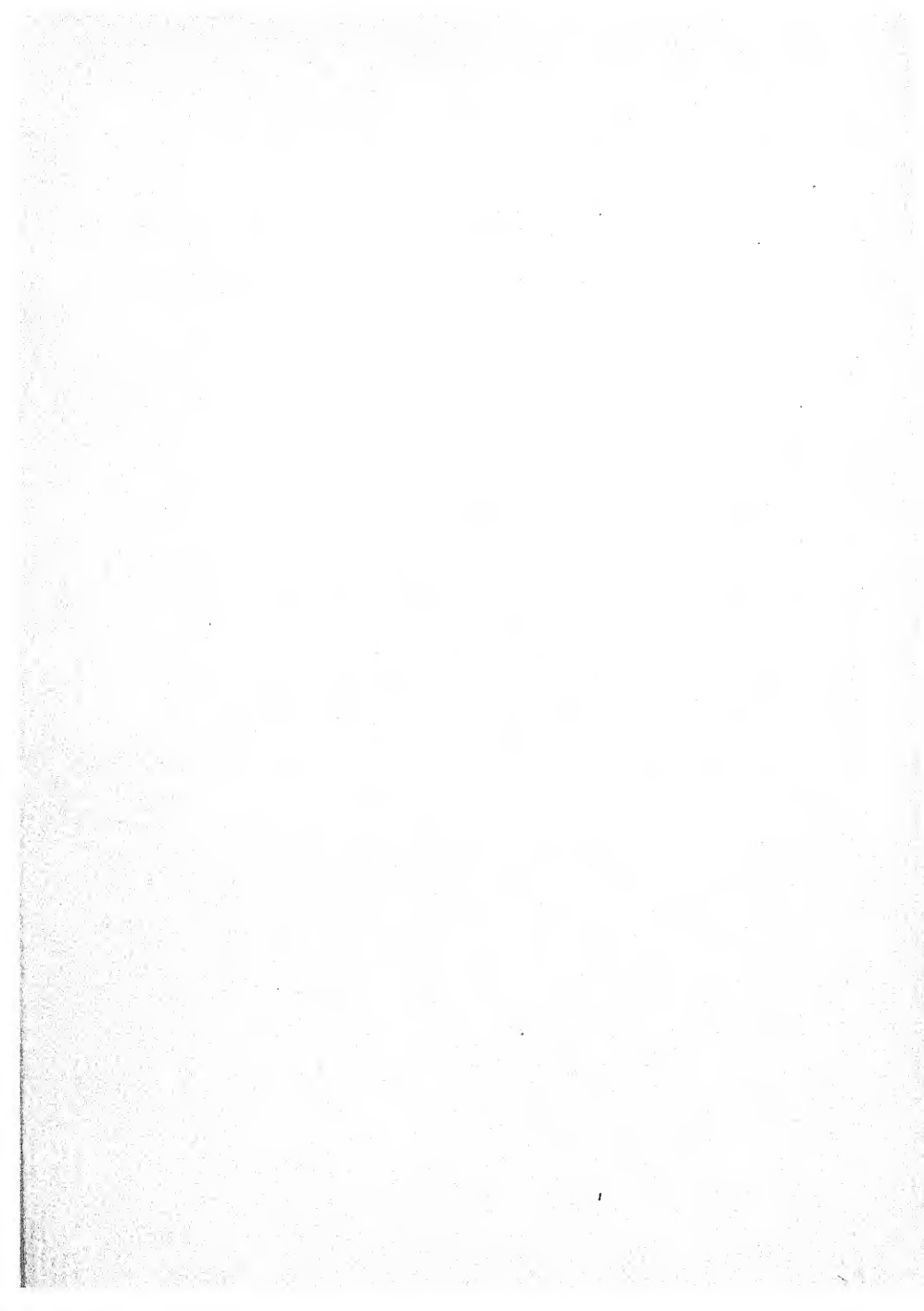
Name	Born	Died	Page
Angelo Bronzino.....	1502	1572	815
Il Sodoma.....	1477	1549	815
Baldassare Peruzzi.....	1481	1536	816
Domenico Beccafumi.....	1486	1551	816
Benvenuto Garofalo.....	1481	1559	816
Dosso Dossi.....	about 1479	1542	816
Il Moretto.....	about 1500	after 1556	817
Giovanni Battista Moroni.....	1510	1578	817
Giorgio Vasari.....	1511	1574	—

## ITALIAN LITERATURE

'Questa provincia pare nata per risuscitare le cose morte, come si è visto della Poesia della Pittura e della Scultura'—MACH.: *Arte della Guerra*.

'Italia, sepoltura  
De' lumi suoi, d' eterni candelieri'

CAMPANELLA: *Poesie Filosofiche*



## PREFACE<sup>1</sup>

THIS work on the Renaissance in Italy, of which I now give the last two volumes to the public, was designed and executed on the plan of an essay or analytical inquiry, rather than on that which is appropriate to a continuous history. Each of its four parts—the 'Age of the Despots,' the 'Revival of Learning,' the 'Fine Arts,' and 'Italian Literature'—stood in my mind for a section; each chapter for a paragraph; each paragraph for a sentence. At the same time, it was intended to make the first three parts subsidiary and introductory to the fourth, for which accordingly a wider space and a more minute method of treatment were reserved. The first volume was meant to explain the social and political conditions of Italy; the second to relate the exploration of the classical past which those conditions necessitated, and which determined the intellectual activity of the Italians; the third to exhibit the bias of this people toward figurative art, and briefly to touch upon its various manifestations; in order that, finally, a correct point of view might be obtained for judging of their national literature in its strength and limitations. Literature must always prove the surest guide to the investigator of a people's character at some decisive epoch. To literature, therefore, I felt that the plan of my book allowed me to devote two volumes.

The subject of my inquiry rendered the method I have described, not only natural but necessary. Yet there are special disadvantages, to which progressive history is not liable, in publishing a book of this sort by instalments. Readers of the earlier parts cannot form a just conception of the scope and object of the whole. They cannot perceive the relation of its several sections to each other, or give the author credit for his exercise of judgment in the marshalling and development of topics. They criticise each portion independently, and desire a comprehensiveness in parts, which would have been injurious to the total scheme. Furthermore, this kind of book sorely needs an Index, and its plan renders a general Index, such as will be found at the end of the last volume,<sup>2</sup> more valuable than one made separately for each part.

Of these disadvantages I have been rendered sensible during the progress of publication through the last six years. Yet I have gained some compensation in the fact that the demand for a second edition

<sup>1</sup> to the original edition of this and the next volume.

<sup>2</sup> The complete index in the present edition will be found at the end of the concluding volume.

of the first volume has enabled me to make that portion of the work more adequate.

With regard to authorities consulted in these two concluding volumes, I have special pleasure in recording none—with only insignificant exceptions—but Italian names. The Italians have lately made vigorous strides in the direction of sound historical research and scientific literary criticism. It is not too much to say that the labours of this generation are rapidly creating a radical change in the views hitherto accepted concerning the origins and the development of Italian literature. Theories based on rational investigation and philosophical study are displacing the academical opinions of the last century. The Italians are forming for themselves a just conception of their past, at the same time that they are consolidating their newly gained political unity.

To dwell upon the works of Francesco de Sanctis and Pasquale Villari is hardly necessary here. The former is perhaps less illustrious by official dignity than by his eloquent '*Storia della Letteratura Italiana*.' The latter has gained European reputation as the biographer of Savonarola and Machiavelli, the historian of Florence at their epoch. But English readers are probably not so familiar with the acute and accurate criticism of Giosuè Carducci; with the erudition of Alessandro d'Ancona, and the voluminous industry of the veteran Cesare Cantù; with the intelligence and facile pen of Adolfo Bartoli; with the philological researches of Napoleone Caix, and Francesco Fiorentino's philosophical studies; with Rajna's patient labours in one branch of literary history, and Monaci's discoveries in another; with the miscellaneous contributions to scholarship and learning made by men like Comparetti, Guasti, D' Ovidio, Rubieri, Milanese, Campori, Passano, Biagi, Pitré, Tigri, Vigo, Giudici, Fracassetti, Fanfani, Bonghi, Grion, Mussafia, Morsolin, Del Lungo, Virgili. While alluding thus briefly to students and writers, I should be sorry to omit the names of those publishers—the Florentine Lemonnier, Barbèra, Sansoni; the Neapolitan Morano; the Palermitan Lauriel; the Pisan Vico and Nistri; the Bolognese Romagnoli and Zanichelli—through whose spirited energy so many works of erudition have seen the light.

I have mentioned names almost at random, passing over (not through forgetfulness, but because space compels me) many writers to whom I owe weighty obligations. The notes and references in these volumes will, I trust, contain acknowledgment sufficient to atone for omissions in this place.

Not a few of these distinguished men hold professorial appointments; and it is clear that they are forming students in the great Italian cities, to continue and complete their labours. Very much remains to be explored in the field of Italian literary history. The future promises a harvest of discovery scarcely less rich than that of the last half-century. On many moot points we can at present express but partial or provisional judgments. The historian of the Renaissance must feel that his work, when soundest, may be doomed to be superseded, and when

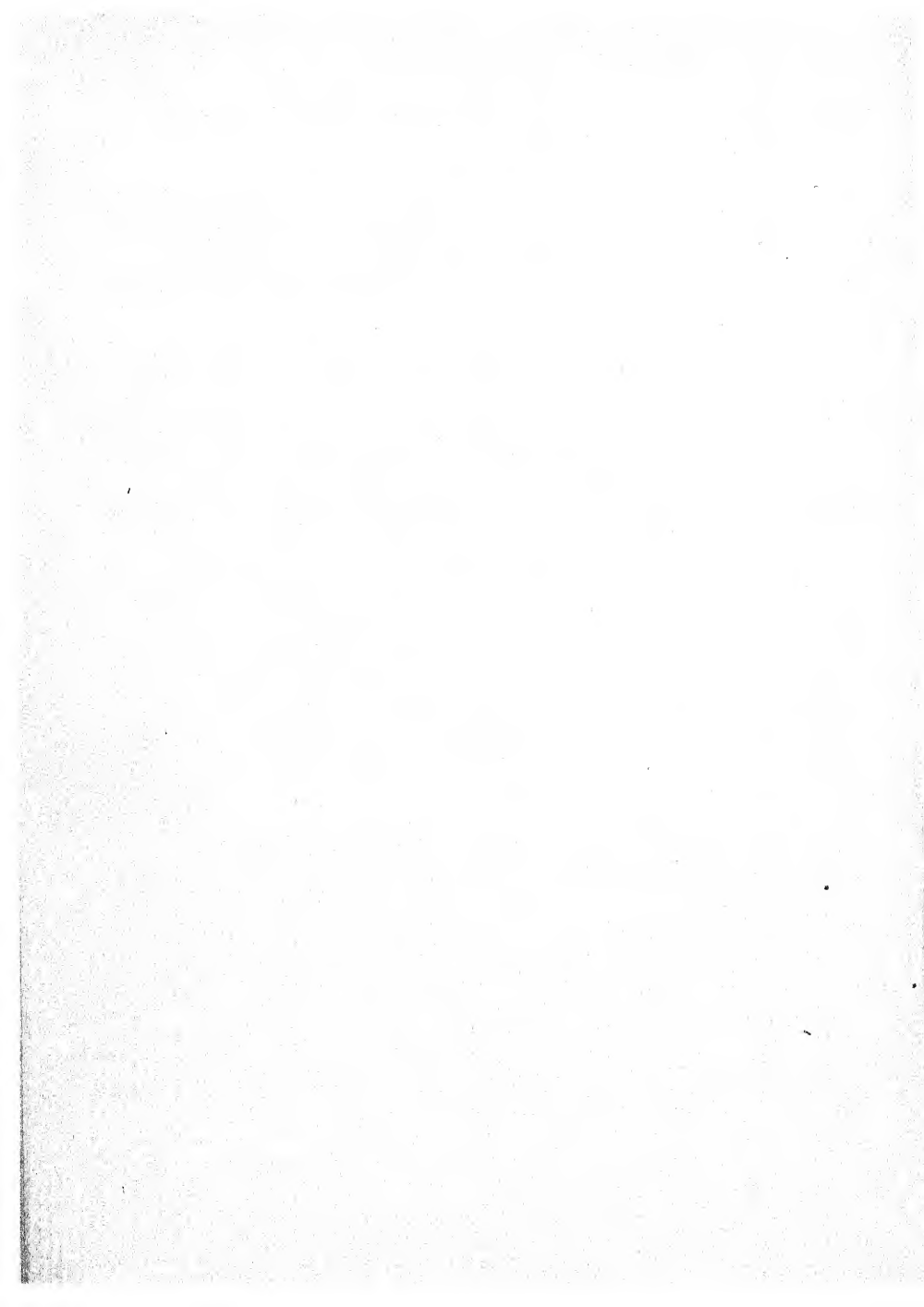
freshest, will ere long seem antiquated. So rapid is the intellectual movement now taking place in Italy.

In conclusion, it remains for me to add that certain passages in Chapter II. have been reproduced from an article by me in the 'Quarterly Review,' while some translations from Poliziano and Boiardo, together with portions of the critical remarks upon those poets, were first published, a few years since, in the 'Fortnightly Review.' From the 'Fortnightly Review,' again, I have extracted the translation of ten sonnets by Folgore da San Gemignano.

In quoting from Italian writers, in the course of this literary history, I have found it best to follow no uniform plan; but, as each occasion demanded, I have given the Italian text, or else an English version, or in some cases both the original and a translation. To explain the motives for my decision in every particular would involve too much expenditure of space. I may, however, add that the verse-translations in these volumes are all from my pen, and have been made at various times for the special purpose of this work.

DAVOS: *March* 1881.





## CHAPTER I

### THE ORIGINS

*The Period from 1300 to 1530—Its Division into Three Sub-Periods—Tardy Development of the Italian Language—Latin and Roman Memories—Political Struggles and Legal Studies—Conditions of Latin Culture in Italy during the Middle Ages—Want of National Legends—The Literatures of Langue d'Oc and Langue d'Oïl cultivated by Italians—Franco-Italian Hybrid—Provençal Lyrics—French Chansons de Geste—Carolingian and Arthurian Romances—Formation of Italian Dialects—Sicilian School of Court Poets—Frederick II.—Problem of the 'Lingua Aulica'—Forms of Poetry and Metres fixed—General Character of the Sicilian Style—Rustic Latin and Modern Italian—Superiority of Tuscan—The 'De Eloquentia'—Plebeian Literature—Moral Works in Rhyme—Emergence of Prose in the Thirteenth Century—Political Songs—Popular Lyrics—Religious Hymns—Process of Tuscanisation—Transference of the Literary Centre from Sicily to Tuscany—Guittone of Arezzo—Bolognese School—Guido Guinicelli—King Enzo's Envoy to Tuscany—Florentine Companies of Pleasure—Folgora da San Gimignano—The Guelph City.*

BETWEEN 1300, the date of Dante's vision, and 1530, the date of the fall of Florence, the greatest work of the Italians in art and literature was accomplished. These two hundred and thirty years may be divided into three nearly equal periods. The first ends with Boccaccio's death in 1375. The second lasts until the birth of Lorenzo de' Medici in 1448. The third embraces the golden age of the Renaissance. In the first period Italian literature was formed. In the second intervened the studies of the humanists. In the third, these studies were carried over to the profit of the mother-tongue. The first period extends over seventy-five years; the second over seventy-three; the third over eighty-two. With the first date, 1300, we may connect the jubilee of Boniface and the translation of the Papal See to Avignon (1304); with the second, 1375, the formation of the Albizzi oligarchy in Florence (1381); with the third, 1448, the capture of Constantinople (1453); and with the fourth, 1530, the death of Ariosto (1533) and the new direction given to the Papal policy by the Sack of Rome (1527).

The chronological limits assigned to the Italian Renaissance in the first volume of this book would confine the history of literature to about eighty years between 1453 and 1527; and it will be seen by reference to the foregoing paragraph that it would not be impossible to isolate that span of time. In dealing with Renaissance literature, it so happens that strict boundaries can be better observed than in the case of politics, fine arts, or learning. Yet to adhere to this section of literary history without adverting to the antecedent periods, would be to break

the chain of national development, which in the evolution of the Italian language is even more important than in any other branch of culture. If the renaissance of the arts must be traced from Cimabue and Pisano, the spirit of the race, as it expressed itself in modern speech, demands a still more retrogressive survey, in order to render the account of its ultimate results intelligible.

The first and most brilliant age of Italian literature ended with Boccaccio, who traced the lines on which the future labours of the nation were conducted. It was succeeded by nearly a century of Greek and Latin scholarship. To study the masterpieces of Dante and Petrarch, or to practise their language, was thought beneath the dignity of men like Valla, Poggio, or Pontano. But toward the close of the fifteenth century, chiefly through the influence of Lorenzo de' Medici and his courtiers, a strong interest in the mother-tongue revived. Therefore the vernacular literature of the Renaissance, as compared with that of the expiring middle ages, was itself a renaissance or revival. It reverted to the models furnished by Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, and combined them with the classics, which had for so long a while eclipsed their fame. Before proceeding to trace the course of this revival, which forms the special subject of this and the next volume, it will be needful to review the literature of the fourteenth century, and to show under what forms that literature survived among the people during the classical enthusiasm of the fifteenth century. Only by this antecedent investigation can the new direction taken by the genius of the combined Italian nation, after the decline of scholarship, be understood. Thus the three sub-periods of the 230 years above described may be severally named the medieval, the humanistic, and the renascent. To demonstrate their connection and final explication is my purpose in this section of my work on the Renaissance.

In the development of a modern language Italy showed less precocity than other European nations. The causes of this tardiness are not far to seek. Latin, the universal tongue of mediæval culture, lay closer to the dialects of the peninsula than to the native speech of Celtic and Teutonic races, for whom the official language of the Empire and the Church always exhibited a foreign character. In Italy the ancient speech of culture was at home; and nothing had happened to weaken its supremacy. The literary needs of the Italians were satisfied with Latin; nor did the genius of the new people make a vigorous effort to fashion for itself a vehicle of utterance. Traditions of Roman education lingered in the Lombard cities, which boasted of secular schools, where grammarians and rhetoricians taught their art according to antique method, long after the culture of the North had passed into the hands of ecclesiastics.<sup>1</sup> When Charlemagne sought to resuscitate learning, he had recourse to these Italian teachers; and the importance of the distinction between Italians and Franks or Germans, in this respect, was

<sup>1</sup> See Giesebrecht, *De Litterarum studiis apud Italos primis mediævi sæculis*, Bero lini, 1845, p. 15.

felt so late as the eleventh century. Some verses in the Panegyric addressed by Wippo to the Emperor Henry III. brings the case so vividly before us that it may be worth while to transcribe them here:<sup>2</sup>

Tunc fac edictum per terram Teutonicorum,  
 Quilibet ut dives sibi natos instruat omnes  
 Litterulis, legemque suam persuadeat illis,  
 Ut, cum principibus placitandi venerit usus,  
 Quisque suis libris exemplum proferat illis.  
 Moribus his dudum vivebat Roma decenter:  
 His studiis tantos potuit vincere tyrannos.  
 Hoc servant Itali post prima crepundia cuncti;  
 Et sudare scholis mandatur tota juvenus.  
 Solis Teutonicis vacuum vel turpe videtur,  
 Ut doceant aliquem nisi clericus accipiatur.

While the Italians thus continued the rhetorical and legal studies of the ancients, they did not forget that they were representatives and descendants of the Romans. The Republic and the Empire were for them the two most glorious epochs of their own history; and any attempt which they made to revive either literature or art, was imitative of the past. They were not in the position to take a new departure. No popular epic, like the Niebelungen of the Teuton, the Arthurian legend of the Celt, the Song of Roland of the Frank, or the Spanish Cid, could have sprung up on Italian soil. The material was wanting to a race that knew its own antiquity. Even when an Italian undertook a digest of the Tale of Troy or of the Life of Alexander, he converted the metrical romances of the middle ages into prose, obeying an instinct which led him to regard the classical past as part of his own history.<sup>3</sup> In like manner, the recollection of a previous municipal organisation in the communes, together with the growing ideal of a Roman Empire, which should restore Italy to her place of sovereignty among the nations, proved serious obstacles to the unification of the people. We have already seen that this reversion of the popular imagination to Rome may be reckoned among the reasons why the victory of Legnano and the Peace of Constance were comparatively fruitless.<sup>4</sup> Politically, socially, and intellectually, the Italians persisted in a dream of their Latin destiny, long after the feasibility of realising that vision had been destroyed, and when the modern era had already formed itself upon a new type in the federation of the younger races.

Of hardly less importance, as negative influences, were the failure of feudalism to take firm hold upon Italian soil, and the defect of its

<sup>2</sup> See Giesebrecht, *op. cit.* p. 19. Wippo recommends the Emperor to compel his subjects to educate their sons in letters and law. It was by such studies that ancient Rome acquired her greatness. In Italy at the present time, he says, all boys pass from the games of childhood into schools. It is only the Teutons who think it idle or disgraceful for a man to study unless he be intended for a clerical career.

<sup>3</sup> See Adolfo Bartoli, *Storia della Letteratura Italiana*, vol. i. pp. 142-158, and p. 167, on Guido delle Colonne and Qualichino da Spoleto.

<sup>4</sup> See above, *Age of the Despots*, chap. ii.

ideal, chivalry. The literature of *trouvères*, *troubadours*, and *minne-singers* grew up and flourished in the castles of the North; nor was it until the Italians, under the sway of the Hohenstauffen princes, possessed something analogous to a Provençal Court, that the right conditions for the development of literary art in the vernacular were attained. From this point of view Dante's phrase of *lingua aulica*, to express the dialect of culture, is both scientific and significant. It will further appear in the course of this chapter that the earliest dawn of Italian literature can be traced to those minor Courts of Piedmont and the Trevisan Marches, where the people borrowed the forms of feudal society more sympathetically than elsewhere in Italy.

It must moreover be remembered that during the eleventh and twelfth centuries the force of the Italian people was concentrated upon two great political struggles, the contest of the Church with the Empire, and the War of Lombard Independence. In the prosecution of these quarrels, the Italians lost sight of letters, art, theology. They became a race of statesmen and jurists. Their greatest divines and metaphysicians wandered northward into France and England. Their most famous university, that of Bologna, acquired a world-wide reputation as a school of jurisprudence. Legal studies and political activity occupied the attention of their ablest men. It would be difficult to overrate the magnitude of the work done during those two centuries. In the course of them, the Italians gave final form to the organism of the Papacy, which must be regarded as a product of their constructive genius. They developed republican governments of differing types in each of their great cities, and made, for the first time since the foundation of the Empire, the name of *People* sovereign. They resuscitated Roman law, and reorganised the commerce of the Mediterranean. Remaining loyal to the Empire as an idea, they shook off the yoke of the German Cæsars; and while the Papacy was their own handiwork, they alone of European nations, viewed it politically rather than religiously, and so weakened it as to prepare the way for the Babylonian captivity at Avignon.

Thus, through the people's familiarity with Latin; through the survival of Roman grammar schools and the memory of Roman local institutions; through a paramount and all-pervading enthusiasm for the Roman past; through the lack of new legendary and epical material; through the failure of feudalism, and through the political ferment attending on the Wars of Investiture and Independence, the Italians were slow to produce a modern language and a literature of modern type. They came late into the field; and when they took their place at last, their language presented a striking parallel to their political condition. As they failed to acquire a solid nationality, but remained split up into petty States, united by a Pan-Italic sentiment; so they failed to form a common speech. The written Italian of the future was used in its integrity by no one province; each district clinging to its

dialect with obstinate pride.<sup>5</sup> Yet, though the race was tardy in literary development, and though the tongue of Ariosto has never become so thoroughly Italian as that of Shakspeare is English or that of Molière is French; still, on their first appearance, the Italian masters proved themselves at once capable of work maturer and more monumental than any which had been produced in modern Europe. Their education during two centuries of strife was not without effect. The conditions of burghership in their free communes, the stirring of their political energies, the liberty of their *popolo*, and the keen sense of reality developed by their legal studies, prepared men like Dante and Guido Cavalcanti for solving the problems of art in a resolute, mature and manly spirit, fully conscious of the aim before them, and self-possessed in the assurance of adult faculties.

In the first, or, as it may be termed, the Latin period of mediæval culture, there was not much to distinguish the Italians from the rest of Europe. Those Lombard schools, of which mention has already been made, did indeed maintain the traditions of decadent classical education more alive than among the peoples of the North. Better Latin, and particularly more fluent Latin verse, was written during the dark ages in Italy than elsewhere.<sup>6</sup> Still it does not appear that the whole credit of mediæval Latin hymnology and of its curious counterpart, the songs of the wandering students, should be attributed to the Italians. While we can refer the 'Dies Iræ,' 'Lauda Sion,' 'Pange Lingua,' and 'Stabat Mater' with tolerable certainty to Italian poets; while there is abundant internal evidence to prove that some of the best 'Carmina Burana' were composed in Italy and under Italian influences; yet Paris, the focus of theological and ecclesiastical learning, as Bologna was the centre of legal studies, must be regarded as the headquarters of that literary movement which gave the rhyming hexameters of Bernard of Morlas and the lyrics of the Goliardi to Europe.<sup>7</sup> It seems clear that we cannot ascribe to the Italians of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries any superiority in the use of Latin over the schools of France. Their previous vantage-ground had been lost in the political distractions of their country. At the same time, they were the first jurists and the hardest, if not the most philosophical, freethinkers of Europe.

This is a point which demands at least a passing notice. Their practical studies, and the example of an emperor at war with Christendom, helped to form a sect of epicureans in Italy, for whom nothing sanctioned

<sup>5</sup> The Italians did not even begin to reflect upon their *lingua volgare* until the special characters and temperaments of their chief States had been fixed and formed. In other words, their social and political development far anticipated their literary evolution. There remained no centre from which the vulgar tongue could radiate, absorbing local dialects. Each State was itself a centre, perpetuating dialect.

<sup>6</sup> See Du Ménil, *Poésies Populaires Latines antérieures au douzième Siècle*, Paris, 1843.

<sup>7</sup> Regarding the authorship of Latin hymns see the notes in Mone's *Hymni Latini Medii Ævi*, Friburgi Brisgovie, 1853, 3 vols. For the French origin of *Carmina Burana* see *Die lateinischen Vagantenlieder des Mittelalters*, von Oscar Hubatsch, Görlitz, 1870.

by ecclesiastical authority was sacred. To these pioneers of modern incredulity Dante assigned not the least striking Cantos of the 'Inferno.' Their appearance in the thirteenth century, during the ascendancy of Latin culture, before the people had acquired a language, is one of the first manifestations of a national bias toward positive modes of thought and feeling, which we recognise alike in Boccaccio and Ariosto, Machiavelli and Guicciardini, Pomponazzi and the speculators of the South Italian School. It was the quality, in fact, which fitted the Italians for their work in the Renaissance. As metaphysicians in the stricter sense of that word, they have been surpassed by Northern races. Their religious sense has never been so vivid, nor their opposition to established creeds so earnest. But throughout modern history, their great men have manifested a practical and negative good sense, worldly in its moral tone, impervious to pietistic influences, antagonistic to mysticism, contented with concrete reality, which has distinguished them from the more fervent, boyish, sanguine, and imaginative enthusiasts of Northern Europe. We are tempted to speculate whether, as they were the heirs of ancient civility and grew up among the ruins of Roman greatness, so they were born spiritually old and disillusioned.

Another point which distinguished the Italians in this Latin period of their literature, was the absence of the legendary or myth-making faculty. It is not merely that they formed no epic, and gave birth to no great Saga; but they accepted the fabulous matter, transmitted to them from other nations, in a prosaic and positive spirit. This does not imply that they exercised a critical faculty, or passed judgment on the products of the mediæval fancy. On the contrary, they took legend for fact, and treated it as the material of history. Hector, Alexander, and Attila were stripped of their romantic environments, and presented in the cold prose of a digest, as persons whose acts could be sententiously narrated. This attitude of the Italians toward the Saga is by no means insignificant. When their poets came to treat Arthurian or Carolingian fables in the epics of Orlando, they apprehended them in the same positive spirit, adding elements of irony and satire.

For the rest, the Italians shared with other nations the common stock of mediæval literature—Chronicles, Encyclopædias, Epitomes, Moralizations, Histories in verse, Rhetorical Summaries, and prose abstracts of Universal History—the meagre *débris* and detritus of the huge moraines carried down by extinct classic glaciers. It is not needful to dwell upon this aspect of the national culture, since it presents no specific features. What is most to our purpose, is to note the affectionate remembrance of Rome and Roman worthies, which endured in each great town. The people, as distinguished from the feudal nobility, were and ever felt themselves to be the heirs of the old Roman population. Therefore the soldiers on guard against the Huns at Modena in 924, sang in their barbarous Latin verse of Hector and the Capitol:<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Du Ménil, *op. cit.* p. 268.



Dum Hector vigil exstitit in Troia,  
 Non eam cepit fraudulenta Græcia:  
 Prima quiete dormiente Troia,  
 Laxavit Sinon fallax claustra perfida . . .  
 Vigili voce avis anser candida  
 Fugavit Gallos ex arce Romulea;  
 Pro qua virtute facta est argentea,  
 Et a Romanis adorata ut Dea.

The Tuscan women told tales of Troy and Catiline and Julius Cæsar:<sup>9</sup>

L' altra, traendo alla rocca la chioma,  
 Favoleggiava con la sua famiglia  
 De' Troiani e di Fiesole e di Roma.

A rhyming chronicler of Pisa compared the battles of the burghers against the Saracens with the Punic wars. The tomb of Virgil at Naples was an object for pilgrimage, and one of the few spots round which a group of local legends clustered. The memory of Livy added lustre to Padua, and Mussato boasted that her walls, like those of Troy, her mother-city, were sacrosanct. The memory of the Plinies ennobled Como, that of Ovid gave glory to Sulmona, that of Tully to Arpino. Florence clung to the mutilated statue of Mars upon her bridge with almost superstitious reverence, as proof of Roman origin; while Siena adopted for her ensign the she-wolf and the Roman twins. Pagan customs survived, and were jealously maintained in the central and southern provinces; and the name of the Republic sufficed to stir Arnold's revolution in Rome, long before the days of Rienzi. To the mighty German potentate, King Frederick Barbarossa, attended with his Northern chivalry, a handful of Romans dared to say: 'Thou wast a stranger; I, the City, gave thee civic rights. Thou camest from transalpine regions; I have conferred on thee the principality.'<sup>10</sup> It would be easy to multiply these instances. Enough, however, has been said to show that through the gloom of mediæval history, before humanism had begun to dawn, and while the other nations were creating legends and popular epics, Italy maintained a dim but tenacious sense of her Roman past. This consciousness has here to be insisted on, not merely because it stood in the way of mythopœic activity, but because it found full and proper satisfaction in that Revival of Learning which decided the Renaissance.

While the Italians were fighting the Wars of Investiture and Independence, two literatures had arisen in the country which we now call France. Two languages, the *langue d'oc* and the *langue d'oïl*, gave birth to two separate species of poetry. The master-product of the latter was the Song of Roland, which, together with the after-birth of Arthurian romance, flooded Europe with narratives, embodying in a more or less epical form the ideals, enthusiasms, and social creed of Chivalry. The

<sup>9</sup> Dante *Paradiso*, xv.

<sup>10</sup> See *Age of the Despots*, p. 33.

former, cultivated in the southern provinces that border on the Mediterranean, yielded a refined and courtly fashion of lyrical verse, which took the form of love-songs, battle-songs, and satires, and which is now known as Provençal literature. The influence of feudal culture, communicated through these two distinct but closely connected channels, was soon felt in Italy. The second phase of Italian development has been called Lombard, because it was chiefly in the north of the peninsula that the motive force derived from France was active. Yet if we regard the matter of this new literature, rather than its geographical distribution, we shall more correctly designate it by the title Franco-Italian. In the first or Latin period, the Italians used an ancient language. They now adopted not only the forms but also the speech of the people from whom they received their literary impulse. It is probable that the Lombard dialects were still too rough to be accommodated to the new French style. The cultivated classes were familiar with Latin, and had felt no need of raising the vernacular above the bare necessities of intercourse. But the superior social development of the French courts and castles must be reckoned the main reason why their language was acclimatised in Italy together with their literature. Just as the Germans before the age of Herder adopted polite culture, together with the French tongue, ready-made from France, so now the Lombard nobles, bordering by the Riviera upon Provence, borrowed poetry together with its diction, from the valley of the Rhone. Passing along the Genoese coast, crossing the Cottian Alps, and following the valley of the Po, the languages of France and Provence diffused themselves throughout the North of Italy. With the *langue d'oïl* came the Chansons de Geste of the Carolingian Cycle and the romances of the Arthurian legend. With the *langue d'oc* came the various forms of troubadour lyric. Without displacing the local dialects, these imported languages were used and spoken purely by the nobles; while a hybrid, known as *franco-italian*, sprang up for the common people, who listened to the tales of Roland and Rinaldo on the market-place. The district in which the whole mass of this foreign literature seems to have flourished most at first, was the Trevisan March, stretching from the Adige, along the Po, beyond the Brenta and past Venice, to the base of the Friulian Alps. The Marches of Treviso were long known as 'La Marca Amorosa' or 'Gioiosa,' epithets which strongly recall the Provençal phrases of 'Joie' and 'Gai Saber,' and which are familiar to English readers of Sir Thomas Mallory in the name of Lancelot's castle, 'Joyous Gard.' Exactly to define the period of Trevisan culture would be difficult. It is probable that it began to flourish about the end of the twelfth, and declined in the middle of the thirteenth century. Dante alludes to it in a famous passage of the 'Purgatory':<sup>11</sup>

In sul paese ch' Adige e Po riga,  
Solea valore e cortesia trovarsi  
Prima che Federigo avesse briga.

<sup>11</sup> xvi. 115.

There are many traces of advanced French civilisation in this district, among which may be mentioned the exhibition of Miracle Plays upon the French type at Civitale in the years 1298 and 1304, and the 'Castello d' Amore' at Treviso described by Rolandini in the year 1214. Yet, though the Trevisan Marches were the nucleus of this Gallicising fashion, the use of French and Provençal spread widely through the North and down into the centre of Italy. Numerous manuscripts in the *langue d'oïl* attest the popularity of the Arthurian romances throughout Lombardy, and we know that in Umbria S. Francis first composed poetry in French.<sup>12</sup> It was in French, again, that Brunetto Latini wrote his 'Tesoro.' So late as the middle of the fourteenth century this habit had not died out. Dante in the 'Convito' thought it necessary to stigmatise 'those men of perverse mind in Italy who commend the vulgar tongue of foreigners and depreciate their own.'

We have seen that the language and the matter of this imported literature were twofold; and we can distinguish two distinct currents, after its reception into Italy. The Provençal lyric, as was natural, attracted the attention of the nobles; and since feudalism had a stronger hold upon the valley of the Po than on any other district, Lombardy became the chief home of this poetry. Not to mention the numerous Provençal singers who sought fortune and adventure in Northern Italy, about twenty-five Italians, using the *langue d'oc*, may be numbered between the Marchese Alberto Malaspina, who held Lunigiana about 1204, and the Maestro Ferrara, who lived at the Court of Azzo VII. of Este.<sup>13</sup> These were for the most part courtiers and imperial feudatories; and only two were Tuscans. The person of one of them, Sordello, is familiar to every reader of the 'Purgatory.'

The second tide of influence passed from Northern France together with the epics of chivalry. But its operation was not so simple as that of the Provençal lyric. We can trace for instance a marked difference between the effect produced by the Chansons de Geste and that of the Arthurian tales. The latter seem to have been appropriated by the nobles, while the former found acceptance with the people. Nor was this unnatural. At the opening of the twelfth century the Carolingian Cycle had begun to lose its vogue among the polished aristocracy of France. That uncompromising history of warfare hardly suited a society which had developed the courtesy and the romance of chivalry. It represented the manners of an antecedent age of feudalism. Therefore the tales of the Round Table arose to satisfy the needs of knights and ladies, whose thoughts were turned to love, the chase, the tournament, and errantry. The Arthurian myth idealised their newer and more refined type of feudal civility. It was upon the material of this romantic Epic that the nobles of North Italy fastened with the greatest eagerness. No one has forgotten how the tragedy of Lancelot and

<sup>12</sup> See D' Ancona, *Poesia Popolare*, p. 11, note.

<sup>13</sup> See Carducci, *Dello Svolgimento della Letteratura Nazionale*, p. 29.

Guinevere proved, in a later day, the ruin of Francesca and her lover.<sup>14</sup> The people, on the other hand, took livelier interest in the songs of Roland and Charlemagne. The Chansons de Geste formed the stock-in-trade of those 'Cantatores Francigenarum' who crowded the streets and squares of Lombard cities.<sup>15</sup> The exchange of courtesies and refined sentiments between a Tristram and Iseult or a Lancelot and Guinevere must naturally have been less attractive to a rude populace than narratives of battle with the Infidel, and Roland's horn, and Gano's treason, and Rinaldo's quarrels with his liege. In the Arthurian Cycle names and places alike—Avalon, Camelot, Winchester, Gawain, Galahaut—were distant and ill adapted to Italian ears.<sup>16</sup> The whole tissue of the Romance, moreover, was imaginative. The Carolingian Cycle, on the contrary, introduced personages with a good right to be considered historical, and dwelt upon familiar names and traditional ideas. We are not, therefore, surprised to find that this Epic took a strong hold on the popular imagination, and so penetrated the Italian race as to assume a new form on Italian soil, while the Arthurian romance survived as a pastime of the upper classes, and underwent no important metamorphosis at their hands. In the course of this volume, I shall have to show how, when Italian literature emerged again from the people after nearly a century of neglect, it was the transformed tale of Charlemagne and Roland which supplied the Italian nation with its master-works of epic poetry—the 'Morgante' and the two 'Orlandos.'

The Lombard, or rather the Franco-Italian, period is marked by the adoption of a foreign language and foreign fashions. Literature at this stage was exotic and artificial; but the legacy transmitted to the future was of vast importance. On the one side, the courtly rhymers who versified in the Provençal dialect, bequeathed to Sicily and Tuscany the chivalrous lyric of love, which was destined to take its final and fairest form from Dante and Petrarch. On the other hand, the populace who listened to the Song of Roland on the market-place, prepared the necessary conditions for a specific and eminently characteristic product of Italian genius. Without a national epic, the Italians were forced to borrow from the French. But what they borrowed, they transmuted—not merely adding new material, like the tale of Gano's treason and the

<sup>14</sup> Romagnoli has reprinted some specimens of the *Illustre et Famosa Historia di Lancillotto del Lago*, Bologna, 1862.

<sup>15</sup> Muratori, in *Antiq. Ital. Diss.* xxx. p. 351, quotes a decree of the Bolognese Commune, dated 1288, to the effect that *Cantatores Francigenarum in plateis Communis omnino morari non possint*. They had become a public nuisance and impeded traffic.

<sup>16</sup> In the *Cento Novelle* there are several Arthurian stories. The rubrics of one or two will suffice to show how the names were Italianised. *Qui conta come la damigella di Scalot morì per amore di Lancillotto de Lac*. Nov. lxxxii. *Qui conta della reina Isotta e di m. Tristano di Leonis*. Nov. lxxv. In the *Historia di Lancillotto*, cited above, Sir Kay becomes *Keux*; Gawain is *Gauvain*. In the *Tavola Ritonda*, Morderette stands for Mordred, *Bando di Benoiche* for Ban of Benwick, *Lotto d' Organia* for Lot of Orkeney.

fiction of Orlando's birth at Sutri, but importing their own spirit, positive, ironical and incredulous, into the substance of the legend.

In the course of Italianising the tale of Roland, the native dialects made their first effort to assume a literary form. We possess sufficient M<sup>S</sup>. evidence to prove that the Franco-Italian language of the songs recited to the Lombard townfolk, was composed by the adaptation of local modes of speech to French originals. The process was not one of pure translation. The dialects were not fit for such performance. It may rather be described as the attempt of the dialects to acquire capacity for studied expression. With French poems before them, the popular rhapsodes introduced dialectical phrases, substituted words, and, where this was possible, modified the style in favour of the dialect they wished to use. French still predominated. But the hybrid was of such a nature that a transition from this mixed jargon to the dialect, presented in a literary shape, was imminent.

There is sufficient ground for presuming that the Italian dialects triumphed simultaneously in all parts of the peninsula about the middle of the thirteenth century.<sup>17</sup> This presumption is founded partly on the quotations from dialectical poetry furnished by Dante in the 'De Eloquentia,' which prove a widespread literary activity; partly on fragments recovered from sources which can be referred to the second half of the century. The peculiar problems offered by the conditions of poetry at Frederick II.'s Court, though these are open to many contradictory solutions, render the presumption more than probable. It is difficult to understand the third or Sicilian period of literature without hypothesising an antecedent stage of vulgar poetry produced in local dialects. But, owing to the scarcity of documents, no positive facts regarding the date and mode of their emergence can be adduced. We have on this point to deal with matters of delicate conjecture and minute inference; and though it might seem logical to introduce at once a discussion on the growth of the Italian language, and its relation to the dialects which were undoubtedly spoken before they were committed to writing, special reasons induce me to defer this topic for the present.

While the North of Italy was deriving the literature both of its cultivated classes and of the people from France, a new and still more important phase of evolution was preparing in the South. Both Dante and Petrarch recognise the Sicilian poets as the first to cultivate the vulgar tongue with any measure of success, and to raise it to the dignity of a literary language. In this opinion they not only uttered the tradition of their age, but were also without doubt historically correct. Whatever view may be adopted concerning the formation of the *lingua illustre*, or polished Italian, from the dialectical elements already employed in local kinds of poetry, there is no disputing the importance of the Sicilian epoch. We cannot fix precise dates for its duration. Yet, roughly speaking, it may be said to have begun in 1166, when trouba-

<sup>17</sup> See Adolfo Bartoli, *Storia della Letteratura Italiana*, vol. ii. chapters iii., iv., v., vi., for a minute inquiry into this early dialectical literature.

dours of some distinction gathered round the person of the Norman king, William II., at Palermo, and to have ended in 1266, when Manfred was killed at the battle of Benevento. It culminated during the reign of the Emperor Frederick II. (1210-1250), who was himself skilled in Latin and the vulgar tongues of France and Italy, and who drew to his Court men distinguished for their abilities in science and literature. Dante called Frederick, *Cherico grande*. The author of the 'Cento Novelle' described him as *veramente specchio del mondo in parlare et in costumi*, and spoke of his capital as the resort of *la gente ch'avea bontade . . . sonatori, trovatori, e belli favellatori, uomini d'arti, giostratori, schermitori, d'ogni maniera gente*.<sup>18</sup> The portrait drawn of him by Salimbene in his contemporary chronicle, though highly unfavourable to the schismatic enemy of Holy Church, proves that his reputation was great in Italy as a patron of letters and himself a poet of no mean pretensions.<sup>19</sup>

It is impossible in these pages to inquire into the views of this great ruler for the resuscitation of culture in Italy, which, had he not been thwarted in his policy by the Church, might have anticipated the Renaissance by two centuries. Yet the opinion may be hazarded that the cultivation of Italian as a literary language was due in no small measure to the forethought and deliberate intention of an Emperor, who preferred his southern to his northern provinces. Unlike the Lombard nobles, Frederick, while adopting Provençal literature, gave it Italian utterance. This seems to indicate both purpose and prevision on his part. Wishing to found an Italian dynasty, and to acclimatise the civilisation of Provence in his southern capitals, he was careful to promote purely Italian studies. There can at any rate be no doubt that during his reign and under his influence very considerable progress was made towards fixing the diction and the forms of poetry. He found dialects, not merely spoken, but already adapted to poetical expression, in more than one district of Italy. From these districts the most eminent artists flocked to his Court. It was there that a common type of speech was formed, which, when the burghers of Central Italy began to emulate the versifiers of Palermo, furnished them with an established style.

How the *lingua aulica* came into being admits of much debate. "But we may, I think, maintain that the fundamental dialect from which it sprang was Sicilian, purified by comparison with Provençal and Latin, and largely modified by Apulian elements. The difficulty of understanding the problem is in part removed when we remember the variety of representatives from noble towns of Italy who met in Frederick's circle, the tendencies of a dialect to refine itself when it assumes a literary form, and the continuous influences of Court-life in common. Italians gathered round the person of the sovereign at Palermo from their native cities, must in ordinary courtesies have abandoned the crudities

<sup>18</sup> *Cento Novelle*, Milano, 1825, Nov. ii. and xxi.

<sup>19</sup> *Chronica Fr. Salimbene Parmensis*, *Ord. Min.*, Parmæ, 1857, p. 166.

of their respective idioms. This sacrifice could not but have been reciprocal; and since Provençal was not spoken to the exclusion of the mother-tongue, a generic Italian had here the best chance of development. That this generic or Court Italian was at root Sicilian, we have substantial reasons to believe; but that it exactly resembled the Sicilian of today, which does not greatly differ from extant documents of thirteenth and fourteenth century Sicilian dialect, seems too crude a supposition.<sup>20</sup> Unfortunately, our evidence upon this point is singularly scanty. Few poems of the Sicilian period, as will appear in the sequel, have descended to us in their primitive form.

Not only was a common language instituted in the Court of Frederick, but the metrical forms of subsequent Italian poetry were either fixed or suggested by the practice of these early versifiers. Few subjects are involved in darker obscurity than the history of metres—the creation of rhythmical structures whereby one national literature distinguishes itself from another.<sup>21</sup> Just as each writer who can claim an individual style seems to possess his own rhythm, his peculiar tune, to which his sentences are cadenced, so each nation appropriates and adheres to its own metre. The Italian hendecasyllabic, the French Alexandrine, the English heroic iambic, are obvious examples. This selection of a characteristic metre, and the essays through which the race arrives at its perfection, seem to imply some instinct, planted within the depths of national personality, whereof the laws have not been formulated. When we speak of the genius of a language, we do but personify this instinct, which appears to exercise itself at an early period of national development, leaving for subsequent centuries the task of refining and completing what had been projected at the outset. Therefore, nothing very distinct can be asserted about the origin of the hendecasyllabic iambic line, which marks Italian poetry.<sup>22</sup> Yet it certainly appears among the early specimens of the Sicilian period. The rhyming system of the

<sup>20</sup> See the *Chronache Siciliane*, Bologna, Romagnoli, 1865, the first of which bears upon its opening paragraph the date 1358. Sicilian, it may be said in passing, presents close dialectical resemblance to Tuscan. Even the superficial alteration of the Sicilian *u* and *i* into the Tuscan *o* and *e* (e.g. *secundu* and *putiri* into *secondo* and *potere*) effaces the most obvious differences.

<sup>21</sup> The Italians wavered long between several metrical systems, before they finally adopted the hendecasyllabic line, which became the consecrated rhythm of serious poetry. Carducci, in his treatise *Intorno ad alcune Rime* (Imola, Galeati, 1876), pp. 81-89, may be profitably consulted with regard to early Italian Alexandrines. He points out that Ciullo's *Tenzzone*:

Rosa fresc' autentissima—c' appar' in ver' l' estate:

and the Ballata of the Comari:

Pur bi' del vin, comadr'—e no lo temperare:

together with numerous compositions of the Northern Lombard school (Milan and Verona), are written in Alexandrines. In the Lombardo-Sicilian age of Italian literature, before Bologna acted as an intermediate to Florence, this metre bid fair to become acclimatised. But the Tuscan genius determined decisively for the hendecasyllabic.

<sup>22</sup> See the Appendix to this chapter on Italian hendecasyllables.



octave stanza may possibly be traced in Ciullo d'Alcamo's *Tenzone* between the lover and his mistress; though it still needed a century of elaboration at the hands of popular *rispetti*-writers, to present it in completed form to Boccaccio's muse.<sup>23</sup> This poem is Alexandrine in rhythm. *Terza rima* seems to be suggested by the sonnet of the 'Spàrviere;' while a perfect sonnet, differing very little either in structure or in diction from the type of Petrarch's, is supplied in Piero delle Vigne's 'Perocchè amore.' At the same time the high-wrought structure of the *Canzone*, destined to play so triumphant a part during the whole period of the *Trecento*, receives its essential outlines from the rhymers of this age, especially from Jacopo da Lentino and Guido delle Colonne.

Though the forms and language of Sicilian poetry decided the destinies of Italian, the substance of this literature was far from being national. Under its Italian garb, it was no less an exotic than the Provençal and French compositions of the Lombard period. After running a brilliant course in Provence, the poetry of chivalrous love was now declining to its decadence. It had ceased to be the spontaneous expression of a dominant ideal, and had degenerated into a pastime for *dilettanti*. Its style had become conventional; its phrases fixed. The visionary science upon which it was based, had to be studied in codes of doctrine and repeated with pedantic precision. Frederick and his courtiers received it at the point of its extinction. They adhered as closely as possible to traditional forms, imitated time-honoured models, and confined their efforts to the reproduction of the old art in a new vehicle of language. Therefore, vernacular Italian poetry in this first stage of its existence presents the curious spectacle of literature decrepit in the cradle, hampered with the euphuism of an exhausted manner before it could move freely, and taught to frame conceits and cold antitheses before it learned to lisp.

Such, in general, may be said to have been the character of the Sicilian or Italo-Provençal style. Yet a careful student of these *Canzoni*, *Serventesi*, and *Tenzoni*, will discover much that is both natural and graceful, much that is elevated in thought, much again that belongs to the crude sensuousness of Southern temperament. There is an unmistakable blending of the Provençal tradition with indigenous realism, especially in such compositions as the Lament of Odo delle Colonne, the Lament of Ruggieri Pugliese, and the *Tenzone* of Ciullo d'Alcamo.<sup>24</sup> We can trace a double current of inspiration: the one passing downward from the learned writers of the Court, the judges, notaries, and men of state, who followed Provençal tradition; the other upward from the people, who rhymed as nature taught them: both mingling in the com-

<sup>23</sup> See Carducci, *Cantilene*, &c. (Pisa, 1871), pp. 58-60, for thirteenth-century *rispetti* illustrating the Sicilian form of the Octave Stanza and its transformation to the Tuscan type.

<sup>24</sup> The poetry of this period will be found in Trucchi, *Poesie Inedite*, Prato, 1846; *Posti del Primo Secolo*, Firenze, 1816; *Raccolta di Rime Antiche Toscane*, Palermo Assenzio, 1817; and in a critical edition of the *Codex Vaticanus* 3793, *Le Antiche Rime Volgari*, per cura di A. d' Ancona e D. Comparetti, Bologna, Romagnoli, 1875.

positions of those more genial poets, who were able to infuse reality into the laboured form of their adoption. What might have been the destiny of Italian literature, if the Suabian House had maintained its hold on the Two Sicilies, and this process of fusion had been completed at Naples or Palermo, cannot even be surmised. Our knowledge of the earliest Italo-Provençal poetry is vague, owing to lack of genuine Sicilian monuments. We can only trace faint indications of a progress toward greater freedom and more spontaneous inspiration, as the 'courtly makers' yielded to the singers of the people. The battle of Benevento extinguished at one blow both the hopes of the Suabian dynasty and the development of Sicilian poetry. When Manfred's body had been borne naked on a donkey from the battle-field to his nameless grave, amid the cries of *Chi compra Manfredi?* a foreign troubadour, Amerigo di Peguilhan, composed his lament, bidding the *serventese* pass through all lands and over every sea to find the man who knew where Arthur dwelt and when he would return. Arthur was dead, and would never come again. Chivalry and feudalism had held their brief and feeble sway in Italy, and that was over. Neither in Lombardy among the castles, nor in Sicily within the Court, throbbed the real life of the Italian nation. That life was in the Communes. It beat in the heart of the people—especially of that people who had made nobility a crime beside the Arno, and had outlawed the *Scioperati* from their City of the Flower. What the Suabian princes gave to Italy was the beginning of a common language. It remained for Tuscany to stamp that language with her image and superscription, to fix it in its integrity for all future ages, and to render it the vehicle of stateliest science and consummate art.

The question of the origin of the Italian language pertains rather to philology than to the history of culture.<sup>25</sup> Yet I cannot pass it wholly by in silence, since it was raised at an early period by the founders of Italian literature, who occupied themselves with singular sagacity concerning the relations of the literary to the dialectical forms of speech. Dante's 'De Eloquentia,' though based on unscientific principles of analysis, opened a discussion which exercised the acutest intellects of the sixteenth century.

During the whole Roman period, it is certain that literary Latin differed in important respects from the vulgar, rustic or domestic, language. Thus while a Roman gentleman would have said *habeo pulchrum equum*, his groom probably expressed the same thought in words like these: *ego habeo unum bellum caballum*. Between a *graffito* scribbled on the wall of some old Roman building—*Alexander unum animal est*, for instance—and one now chalked in the same district, *Alessandro è un animale*, there is hardly as much difference as between a literary Latin

<sup>25</sup> The most important modern works upon this subject are three Essays by Napoleone Caix, *Saggio sulla Storia della Lingua e dei Dialetti d' Italia*, Parma, 1872; *Studi di Etimologia Italiana e Romanza*, Firenze, 1878; *Le Origini della Lingua Poetica Italiana*, Firenze, 1880. D'Ovidio's Essay on the *De Eloquentia* in his *Saggi Critici*, Napoli, 1878, may also be consulted with advantage.

sentence and either of these rustic epigrams; while the use of such intensives as *multum* and *bene*, to express the superlative degree, indicate in vulgar Latin the presence of a principle alien to literary Latin but sympathetic to modern speech. The vulgar or rustic Latin continued, side by side with its literary counterpart, throughout the middle ages, forming in the first centuries of imperial decline the common speech of the Romance peoples, and gradually assuming those specific forms which determined the French, Spanish, and Italian types. There is little doubt that, could we possess ourselves of sufficient documents, we should be able to trace the stages in this process. Both literary and vulgar Latin suffered transformation—the former declining in purity, variety, and vigour; the latter diverging dialectically into the constituents of the three grand families of modern Latin. But the metamorphosis was not of the same nature in both cases. While the literary language had been fixed, arrested, and delivered over to death, the vulgar tongue retained a vivid and assimilative life, capable of biological transmutation. French, Spanish, and Italian are modes of its existence continued under laws of organic variety and change.

It would be unscientific to suppose that rustic Latin, even in the most flourishing period of the Roman Empire, was identical in all provinces. From the first it must have held within itself the principles of differentiation. And when we consider the varying conditions of soil, climate, ethnological admixture and political development in the several regions of the Roman world, together with the divers influences of contiguous or invasive races, we shall form some notion of the process by which the three languages in question branched off from the common stock of rustic Latin.

The same laws of differentiation hold good with regard to the dialects in each of these new languages. It is improbable that absolutely the same vulgar Latin was at any epoch spoken in two remote districts of the same province—on the Tuscan sea-coast, for example, and on the banks of Padus. Even when the Roman Empire used one language, intelligible from the Ægean to the German Ocean, the Italic districts must have differed in their local vernacular. Again, the same conditions (climatic, ethnological, political, and so forth) which helped to determine the generic distinctions of French, Spanish, and Italian, determined also the specific distinctions of one Italian dialect from another. Those of the north-west, for instance, inclined to Gallic, and those of the north-east to Illyrian idiom. Those of Lombardy in general exhibit a mixture of German words. Those of Sicily and the South approximate more to a Spanish type, and share the effects of Greek and Arab occupation. The dialects of the centre, especially the Tuscan, show marked superiority both in grammatical form and phonetic purity over the more disintegrated and corrupted idioms of North and South. It might be suggested that Tuscan, being less modified by foreign contact, continued the natural life of the old rustic Latin according to laws of unimpeded self-development. But, however we may attempt to explain

this problem, the fact remains that, while the Italian dialects present affinities which show them to be of one linguistic family, it is Tuscan that completes and interprets them collectively. Tuscan stands to Italian in the same relation as Castilian to Spanish, or the speech of the Île de France to French. It is a dialect, but a dialect that realised the bent and striving of the language. We find it difficult to feel, far more to state, what qualities in a dialect and in the people of the district who use it, render one idiom more adapted to literary usage, more characteristic of the language it helps to constitute, more plastic and expressive of national peculiarities, than those around it. But the fact is certain that this superiority in Tuscan was early recognised;<sup>26</sup> and that too without any political advantages in favour of its triumph. Boniface VIII. unconsciously expressed, perhaps, the truth, when he called the Florentines *il quinto elemento*. It was something spiritually quintessential, something complementary to the sister dialects, which caused the success of Tuscan.

Thus, while literary Latin, though dying and almost dead, was still taught in the grammar schools and used by learned men, the rustic Latin in the thirteenth century had disappeared. But this disappearance was not death. It was transformation. The group of dialects which represented the new phase in its existence, shared such common qualities as proved them to have had original affinity, and fitted them for being recognised as a single family. The position, therefore, of the Italians at the close of the thirteenth century with regard to language, was this. They possessed the classic Latin authors in a bad state of preservation, and studied a few of them with some minuteness, basing their own learned style upon the imitation of Virgil and Ovid, Cicero, Boethius, and the rhetoricians of the lower empire. But at home, in their families, upon the market-place, and in the prosecution of business, they talked the local dialects, each of which was more or less remotely representative of the ancient vulgar Latin. However these dialects might differ, they formed in combination a new language, distinct from the parent stock of rustic Latin, and equally distinct from French and Spanish.<sup>27</sup> Whatever difficulty an Italian of Calabria or Friuli might have felt in understanding the 'Divine Comedy,' he would have recognised an element in its diction which defined it from French or Spanish, and marked it out as proper to his mother-tongue. If this was true of the refined type of Tuscan used by a great master, it was no less true of dialectal compositions selected for the express purpose of exhibiting their rudeness. Dante clearly expected contemporary readers not only to interpret, but to appreciate the shades of greater and lesser nicety

<sup>26</sup> 'Lingua Tusca magis apta est ad literam sive literaturam quam aliæ linguæ, et ideo magis est communis et intelligibilis.' Antonio da Tempo, born about 1275, says this in his Treatise on Italian Poetry, recently printed by Giusto Grion, Bologna, Romagnoli, 1869. See p. 174 of that work.

<sup>27</sup> This fact was recognised by Dante. He speaks of the languages of Si, Oil, and Oc, meaning Italian, French, and Spanish. *De Eloquio*, lib. i. cap. 8. Dante points out their differences, but does not neglect their community of origin.

in the examples he culled from Roman, Apulian, Florentine and other vernacular literatures. This expectation proves that he felt himself to be dealing with a group of dialects which, taken collectively, formed a common idiom. In these circumstances it was the problem of writers, at the close of the thirteenth century, to construct the ideal vulgar tongue, to discover its capacities for noble utterance, to refine it for artistic usage by the omission of cruder elements existing in each dialect, and to select from those storehouses of living speech the phrases which appeared well suited to graceful utterance. The desideratum, to use Dante's words, was 'that illustrious, cardinal, courtly, curial mother-tongue, proper to each Italian State, special to none, whereby the local idioms of every city are to be measured, weighed, and compared.'<sup>28</sup> Dante saw that this selection of a literary language from the fresh shoots sent up by the antique vulgar Latin stock could best be accomplished in a capital or Court, the meeting-place of learned people and polished intelligences. But such a metropolis of culture, corresponding to Elizabeth's London or the Paris of Louis XIV., was ever wanting in Italy. 'We have no Court,' he says: 'and yet the members that should compose a Court are not absent.'<sup>29</sup> He refers to men of education and good manners, upon whom, in the absence of a local centre of refinement, fell the duty of reforming the vernacular. The peculiar conditions of Italy, as he described them, were destined to subsist throughout the next two centuries and a half, when men of learning, taking Tuscan as their standard, sought by practice and example to form a national language. The self-consciousness of the Italians front to front with this problem, as revealed to us in the pages of the 'De Eloquentia,' and the decision with which the great authors of the fourteenth century fixed a certain type of diction, accurately spoken nowhere, though nearer to the Tuscan than to any other idiom, may be reckoned among the most interesting phenomena in the history of literature. Tuscan predominated; but that the masterpieces of the *Trecento* were not composed in any one of the unadulterated Tuscan dialects is clear, not merely from the contemporary testimony of Dante himself, but also from the obstinate discussions raised upon this subject by Bembo at a later period. A guiding and controlling principle of taste determined the instinctive method of selection whereby Tuscan was adapted to the common needs of Italy.

While treating of the Latin, the Lombard or Franco-Italian, and the Sicilian or Italo-Provençal periods of national development, I have hitherto neglected that plebeian literature which, although its monuments have almost perished, must have been diffused in dialects through Italy after the opening of the thirteenth century. Written for and by the people, the relics of this prose and poetry are valuable, not merely for the light they throw on the formation of language, but also for their indications of national tendencies. In the northern dialects we meet

<sup>28</sup> *De Vulg. Eloq.* i. 16.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* i. 18.

with treatises of religious, ethical and gnostic import, among which the 'Gerusalemme Celeste' and 'Babilonia Infernale' of Fra Giacomino of Verona, the Bible History of Pietro Bescapé of Milan, the Contention between Satan and the Virgin of Bonvesin da Riva, and two other dialogues by the same author, one between the Soul and Body, the other between a son and his father in hell, deserve mention. To this class again belongs Bonvesin's 'Cinquanta Cortesie da Tavola,' a book of etiquette adapted to the needs of the small *bourgeoisie* upon their entrance into social life.

It is impossible to fix even an approximate date for the emergence of Italian prose. Law documents, deeds of settlement, contracts, and public acts, which can be referred with certainty to the first half of the thirteenth century, display a pressure of the vulgar speech upon the formal Latin of official verbiage. The effort to obtain precision, in designating some particular locality or some important person, forces the scribe back upon his common speech; and these evidences of difficulty in wielding the Latin which had now become a dying language, prove that, long before it was written, Italian was spoken. From the year 1231 we possess accounts of domestic expenditure written by one Mat-tasalà di Spinello dei Lambertini in the Sienese dialect. Then follow Lucchese documents and letters of Sienese citizens, which, though they have no literary value, show that people who could write had begun to express their thoughts in spoken idiom. The first essays in Italian composition for a lettered public were translations from works already written by Italians in *langue d'oïl*. Among these a prominent place must be assigned to the version of Marco Polo's travels, which Rusticiano of Pisa first published in French, having possibly received them in Venetian from the traveller's own lips. The 'Tesoro' of Brunetto Latini and Egidio's 'De Regimine Principum' were Italianised in this way; while numerous digests of Frankish romances, including the collection known as 'Conti di antichi Cavalieri,' appeared to meet the same popular demand. Religious history and ethics furnished another library in the vernacular. The 'Dodici Conti Morali,' the 'Introduzione alle Virtù,' the 'Giardino della Consolazione,' and the 'Libro di Cato' supplied the people with specimens from works already famous. After a like manner, books of rhetoric and grammar in vogue among the mediæval students were popularised in abstracts for Italian readers. We may cite a version of Orosius, and a 'Fiore di Retorica' based upon the 'Ad Herennium' and Cicero. Of scientific compilations, the 'Composizione del Mondo' by Ristoro of Arezzo, embracing astronomical and geographical information, takes rank with the ethical and rhetorical works already mentioned. The note of all these compositions is that they are professedly epitomes of learning, already possessed in more authentic sources by scholars. As such, they prove that there existed a class of readers eager for instruction, to whom books written in Latin or in French were not accessible. In a word, they indicate the advent of the modern tongue, with all its exigencies and with all its capabilities.



To deal with the Chronicles of this period is no easy matter; for those which are professedly the oldest—Matteo Spinelli's, Ricordano Malespini's, and 'Lu Ribellamentu di Sicilia'—have been proved in some sense fabrications. On the other hand, it is clear from the 'Cento Novelle' that the more dramatic episodes of history and myth were being submitted to the same epitomising treatment. Finally we have to mention Guittone of Arezzo's epistles as the first serious attempt to treat the vulgar tongue rhetorically, for a distinct literary purpose.

From the dry records of incipient prose it is refreshing to turn to another species of popular poetry; for poetry in the period of origins is always more adult than prose. Numerous fragments of political songs have been disinterred from chronicles, which can be referred to the thirteenth century. Thus an anonymous Genoese rhymester celebrated the victories of Laiazzo (1294) and Curzola (1298), while Giovanni Villani preserved six lines upon the siege of Messina (1282).<sup>30</sup> Verses in the vulgar tongue commemorating the apostasy of Fra Elia, General of the Franciscans, in 1240, and the coming of the Florentine Lambertesco dei Lamberteschi as Podestà to Reggio in 1243, with scraps of song relating to Pisan and Florentine history, may be read in Carducci's monumental work upon this period of literature.<sup>31</sup> These relics, though precious, are singularly scanty; nor can a Northern student pass them by without remarking the absence of that semi-historical, semi-mythical poetry, which is so familiar to us under the name of Ballad. More important, because of greater extent, are the laments and amorous or comic poems, which can be attributed to the same century. The Lament of the Paduan woman for her husband, who has journeyed to the Holy Land in the Crusade preached by Urban IV., may be compared with Rinaldo d' Aquino's Farewell.<sup>32</sup> Both of these compositions were written under Provençal influence, though the former at least is strictly dialectical and popular. Passing to satirical poems, I may mention two pieces extracted from a Bolognese MS. of 1272, which paint with vivid force of humour the manners of women.<sup>33</sup> One represents a drinking-party of more than Aristophanic freedom; the other, a wrangling match between two sisters-in-law—the 'Cognate.' Each displays facility of composition and a literary style already formed. They are not without French parallels; but the mode of presentation is Italian, and the phrases have been transplanted without change from vulgar dialogue. Two romantic lyrics extracted from the same MS. prove that the fashionable style of Provence had descended from the nobles to the common folk and taken a new tincture of realism.<sup>34</sup> The complaint of an unwedded maiden to her mother is a not uncommon motive in this early literature,

<sup>30</sup> See *Archivio Glottologico Italiano*, vol. ii. Villani, lib. vii. cap. 68.

<sup>31</sup> *Cantilene e Ballate, Strambotti e Madrigali nei Secoli xiii. e xiv.* A cura di Giosuè Carducci (Pisa, 1871), pp. 29-32.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 18, 22.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 39, 42.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 43, 45.



turning either to pathos or suggesting a covert coarseness in the climax.<sup>35</sup> To the same class may be referred some graceful lyrics and dance-songs, combining the artlessness of popular inspiration with reminiscences of French originals.<sup>36</sup> Of these the Nightingale and the Song of Love in Dreams might be selected for their close sympathy with the *rispetti* made in Italian country districts at the present day. Lastly, I have to mention two obscene poems of great popularity, 'Il Nicchio' and 'L' Ugellino.'<sup>37</sup> These were known to Boccaccio, for he refers to them by name at the close of the fifth day in the 'Decameron.' Each of the ditties bears a thoroughly Italian stamp, and anticipates by its peculiar style of *double entendre* a whole department of national poetry—the Florentine Carnival Songs and the Capitoli of the Roman academies being distinctly foreshadowed in their humorous and allusive treatment of a vulgar topic. Hence we may take occasion to observe that those who accuse Lorenzo de' Medici and his contemporaries of debasing popular taste by the deliberate introduction of licentiousness into art, exceed the limits of just censure. What is called the Paganism of the Renaissance was indigenous in Italy. We find it inherent in vulgar literature before the date of Boccaccio; and if, with the advance of social luxury, it assumed, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, a more objectionable prominence, this should not be exclusively ascribed to the influence of humanistic studies or to the example of far-sighted despots. Indeed, it can be asserted that the specific quality of the popular Italian genius—its sensuous realism, qualified with irony—emerges unmistakably in five most important relics of the thirteenth century, the 'Cognate,' the 'Comadri,' the Tenzone of the Maiden and her Mother ('Mamma lo temp' è venuto'), the 'Nicchio,' and the 'Ugellino.'<sup>38</sup> They yield the common stuff of that magnificent art which shall afterwards be developed into the 'Decameron' and the 'Novelle,' out of which shall proceed the comedies and Bernesque lyrics of the 'Cinque Cento,' and which is destined to penetrate the golden cantos of the 'Orlando Furioso.' To an unprejudiced student of Italian arts and letters nothing seems more clearly proved than the fact that a certain powerful objective quality—call it realism, call it sensuousness—determines their most genuine productions, sinking to grossness, ascending to sublimity, combining with religious feeling in the fine arts, blending with the definiteness of classic style, but never absent. It is this objectivity, realism, sensuous-

<sup>35</sup> See *ibid.* p. 45, the stanza which begins, *Matre tant ò.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 47-60.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 62-66.

<sup>38</sup> The practical and realistic common sense of the Italians, rejecting chivalrous and ecclesiastical idealism as so much nonsense, is illustrated by the occasional poems of two Florentine painters—Giotto's Canzone on *Poverty*, and Orcagna's Sonnet on *Love*. Orcagna, in the latter, criticises the conventional blind and winged Cupid, and winds up with:

L' amore è un trastullo:  
Non è composto di legno nè di osso;  
E a molte gente fa rompere il dosso.

ness, which constitutes the strength of the Italians, and assigns the limitations of their faculty.

In quite a different region, but of no less importance for the future of Italian literature, must be reckoned the religious hymns, which, during the thirteenth century, began to be composed in the vernacular. The earliest known specimen is S. Francis' famous 'Cantico del Sole,' which, even as it is preserved to us, after undergoing the process of modernisation, retains the purity and freshness of a bird's note in spring. After S. Francis, but at the distance of half a century, followed Jacopone da Todi, with his passionate and dithyrambic odes, which seem to vibrate tongues of fire. To this religious lyric the Flagellant frenzy (1260) and the subsequent formation of Companies of Laudesi gave decisive impulse. I shall have in a future chapter to discuss the relation between the Umbrian Lauds and the origins of the Drama. It is enough here to notice the part played in the evolution of the language by so early a transition from the Latin Hymns of the Church to Hymns written in the modern speech for private confraternities and domestic gatherings.

We learn from this meagre review of ancient popular poetry that during the thirteenth century the dialects of each district had begun to seek literary expression. There are many indications that the products of one province speedily became the property of the rest. Spontaneous motives were mingled with French and Provençal recollections; and already we can trace the unconscious effort to form a common language in the process known as *Toscaneggiamento*, or the translation of local songs into Tuscan idiom.<sup>39</sup> It would, therefore, be incorrect to imagine either that the Sicilian poets were blank imitators of Provençal models, or that the Italian language started into being at Palermo. What really happened was, that Frederick's Court became the centre of a widespread literary movement. The Sicilian dialect predominating at Palermo over the rest, the poets of different provinces who assembled round the Emperor were subsequently known as Sicilian. Their songs, passing upward through the peninsula, bore that name, even when they had, as at Florence, been converted, by dialectical modifications, to the use of Tuscan folk.<sup>40</sup> The aristocratic tone of the Court made Provençal literature fashionable; and a refined diction, softening the crudities of more than one competing dialect, was formed to express the subtleties of the Provençal style. We must bear in mind that the poets of this Court were men of learned education—judges, notaries, officials. Dante makes *dottori* nearly synonymous with *trovatori*. At the same time, one of the earliest specimens of Sicilian poetry, Ciullo d' Alcamo's 'Tenzzone,' is popular, free from Provençal affectation, inclining to comedy in some of its marked motives and to coarseness at its close. This proves that

<sup>39</sup> See Carducci, *op. cit.* pp. 52-60, for early examples of Tuscanised Sicilian poems of the people.

<sup>40</sup> The Tuscanised Sicilian poems in Carducci's collection, referred to above, are extracted from a Florentine MS. called *Napolitana*, and a Tenzzone between man and woman (*ib.* p. 52), which has clearly undergone a like process, is called *Ciciliana*.

in the island, side by side with 'courtly makers' and *dottori*, there flourished an original and vulgar manner of poetry.

The process of Tuscanisation referred to in the preceding paragraph is too important in its bearings on the problems of Italian language and literature, to be passed over without further discussion. Nearly all the poetry of the Sicilian epoch has been transmitted to us in Florentine MSS., after undergoing *Toscaneggiamento*. We possess but a few stanzas in a pure condition. There is, therefore, reason to believe that when Dante treated of the courtly Sicilian poets in his essay 'De Vulgari Eloquentia,' he knew their writings in a form already Tuscanised.<sup>41</sup> In commending the curial and illustrious vernacular, as something distinct from the dialects, he was in truth praising the dialect of his own province, refined by the practice of polite versifiers. At the date of the composition of that essay, the Suabian House had been extinguished; the literary society of the South was broken up; and to Florence had already fallen the heritage of art. What is even more remarkable, the Bolognese poets, who preceded Dante and his peers by one generation, had abandoned their own dialect in favour of the purified Tuscan. Consequently the new Italian literature was already Tuscan either by origin, or by adoption, or by a process of transformation, before the Florentines assumed the dictatorship of letters. It seems paradoxical to hint that Dante should not have perceived what has been here stated as more than a mere possibility. How came it that he included Florentine among the peccant idioms, and maintained that the true literary speech was still to seek? These doubts may in part at least be removed, when we remember the peculiar conditions under which the courtly poetry he praised had been produced; and the indirect channels by which it had reached him. In the first place, we have seen that it was composed in avowed imitation of Provençal models, by men of taste and learning drawn from several provinces. They culled, for literary purposes, a vocabulary of colourless and neutral words, which clothed the same conventional ideas with elegant and artificial monotony. When these compositions underwent the further process of Tuscanisation (which was easy, owing to certain dialectical affinities between Sicilian and Tuscan), they lost to a large extent what still remained to them of local character, without acquiring the true stamp of Florentine. Even a contemporary could not have recognised in the verse of Jacopo da Lentino, thus treated, either a genuine Sicilian or a genuine Tuscan flavour. His language presented the appearance of being, as indeed it was, different from both idioms. The artifice of style made it pass for superior; and, in purely literary quality, it was in truth superior to the products of plebeian inspiration. We may prefer the racy stanzas of the 'Cognate' to those frigid and exhausted euphuisms. But the critical

<sup>41</sup> See Francesco d' Ovidio, *Sul Trattato De Vulgari Eloquentia*. It is reprinted in his volume of *Saggi Critici*, Napoli, 1879. The subject is fully discussed from a point of view at variance with my text by Adolf Gaspary, *Die Sicilianische Dichterschule*, Berlin, 1878.

taste of so great a master as even Dante was not tuned to any such preference. Though he recognised the defects of the Sicilian poets, as is manifest from his dialogue with Guido in the 'Purgatory,' he gave them all credit for elevating verse above the vulgar level. Their insipid diction seemed to him the first germ of a noble *lingua aulica*. Its colourlessness and strangeness hid the fact that it had already, at the close of the thirteenth century, assumed the Tuscan habit, and that from the well-springs of Tuscan idiom the Italian of the future would have to draw its aliment.

The downfall of the Hohenstauffens and the dispersion of their Court-poets proved a circumstance of decisive benefit to Italian literature, by removing it from a false atmosphere into conditions where it freely flourished and expanded its originality. Feudalism formed no vital part of the Italian social system, and chivalry had never been more than an exotic, cultivated in the hotbed of the aristocracy. The impulse given to poetry in the South, under influences in no true sense of the word national—a Norman-German dynasty attempting to acclimatise Provençal forms upon Italian soil—could hardly have produced a vigorous type of literature. It is from the people, in centres of popular activity, or where the spirit of the people finds full play in representative society, that characteristic art must be developed. When we say this, we think inevitably of Periclean Athens, Elizabeth's London, the Paris of Louis XIV. If the chances of our drama had been confined to Court-patronage or Sidney's 'Areopagus,' instead of being extended to the nation by free competition in the wooden theatres where Marlowe and Shakspeare appealed to popular taste, there is little doubt but that England would have boasted only of a mediocre and academical stage. When Italian poetry deserted Palermo for the banks of Arno, it exchanged the Court for the people; the subtleties of decadent chivalry for the genuine impulses of a free community; the pettiness of culture for the humanities of a public conscious of high destinies and educated in a masculine political arena. Here the grand qualities of the Italian genius found an open field. Literature, abandoning imitative elegance, expressed the feelings, thoughts, and aspirations of a breed second to none in Europe for acuteness of intellect, intensity of emotion, and greatness of purpose. At Palermo the princes and their courtiers had been reciprocally auditors and poets. At Florence the people listened; and the poets, sprung from them, were speakers. Except at Athens in the golden age of Hellas, no populace has equalled that of Florence, both for the production of original genius, and also for the sensitiveness to beauty, diffused throughout all classes, which brings the artist and his audience into right accord.

Two stages in the transition from Sicily to Florence need to be described. Guittone of Arezzo (1230-1294) strikes the historian of literature as the man who first attempted to nationalise the polished poetry of the Sicilian Court, and to strip the new style of its feudal pedantry.<sup>42</sup> It was his aim, apparently, dismissing chivalrous conventions, to use

<sup>42</sup> *Rime di Fra Guittone d' Arezzo*, Firenze, Morandi, 1828, 2 vols.

the diction and the forms of literary art in an immediate appeal to the Italian people. He wrote, however, roughly. Though he practised vernacular prose, and assumed in verse the declamatory tone which Petrarch afterwards employed with such effect in his addresses to the consciousness of Italy, yet Dante could speak of him with cold contempt;<sup>43</sup> nor can we claim for him a higher place than that of a precursor. He attempted more than he was able to fulfil. But his attempt, when judged by the conditions of his epoch, deserves to rank among achievements.

With a poet of Bologna the case is different. Placed midway between Lombardy and Tuscany, Bologna shared the instincts of the two noblest Italian populations—the Communes who wrested liberty from Frederick Barbarossa, and the Communes who were to give arts and letters to the nation. Bologna, moreover, was proud of her legal university, and had already won her title of ‘the learned.’ Here Guido Guinicelli solved the problem of rendering the Sicilian style at once national in spirit and elevated in style.<sup>44</sup> He did so by making it scientific. Receiving from his Italo-Provençal predecessors the material of chivalrous love, and obeying the genius of his native city, Guido rhymed of love no longer as a fashionable pastime, but as the medium of philosophic truth. Learning was the mother of the national Italian poetry. From Guido started a school of transcendental singers, who used the ancient form and subject-matter of exotic poetry for the utterance of metaphysical thought. The Italians, born, as it were, old, were destined thus to pass from imitation, through speculation, to the final freedom of their sensuous art. Of this new lyric style—logical, allegorical, mystical—the first masterpiece was Guido’s *Canzone of the Gentle Heart*. The code was afterwards formulated in Dante’s ‘*Convito*.’ The life it covered and interpreted was painted in the ‘*Vita Nuova*.’ Its apocalypse was the ‘*Paradiso*.’ If Guido Guinicelli did not succeed in writing from the heart, if he was more of an analyst than a lover, it is yet clear that the euphuisms of the Italo-Provençal imitators have yielded in his verse to genuine emotion, while, speaking technically, the complex structure of the true Italian *Canzone* now appears in all its harmony of grace and grandeur. Guido’s language is Tuscan; not the Tuscan of the people, but the Tuscan of the *Toscaneggiamenti*. Herein, again, we note the importance of this poet in the history of literature. Working outside Florence, but obeying Florentine precedent, he stamps Italian with a Tuscan seal, and helps to conceal from Tuscans themselves the high destinies of their idiom.

Dante puts us at the right point of view for estimating Guido’s service. Though he recognised the Sicilians as the first masters of poetic style in Italy, Dante saluted the poet of Bologna as his father:<sup>45</sup>

<sup>43</sup> *De Vulg. Elog.* ii. 6; ii. 1; i. 13; and *Purg.* xxvi. 124.

<sup>44</sup> His poems will be found in the collections above mentioned, p. 20, note.

<sup>45</sup> *Purg.* xxvi.

Quando i' udi' nomar sè stesso il padre  
 Mio, e degli altri miei miglior, che mai  
 Rime d' amor usâr dolci e leggiadre.

On the authority of this sentence we hail in Guido the founder of the new and specifically national literature of the Italians. If not the master, he was the prophet of that *dolce stil nuovo*, which freed them from dependence on foreign traditions, and led, by transmutation, to the miracles of their Renaissance art. He divined that sincere source of inspiration, whereof Dante speaks:<sup>46</sup>

Io mi son un che quando  
 Amore spira, noto; ed a quel modo  
 Ch' ei detta dentro, vo significando.

The happy instinct which led him to use Tuscan, has secured his place upon the roll of poets who may still be read with pleasure. And of this, too, Dante prophesied:<sup>47</sup>

Li dolci detti vostri,  
 Che, quanto durerà l' uso moderno,  
 Faranno cari ancora i loro inchiostri.

Bologna could boast of many minor bards—of the excellent Onesto, of Fabrizio and Ghislieri, *qui doctores fuerunt illustres et vulgarium discretionem repleti*.<sup>48</sup> Her erudition was further illustrated by the work of one Guidotto, who composed a treatise on the new vernacular, which he dedicated to King Manfred. Thus both by example and precept, by the testimony of Dante and the fair fame of her own writers, this city makes for us a link between Sicilian and Tuscan literature.

Manfred was slain at Benevento in 1266, and with him expired the prospects of Sicilian poetry. Dante, destined to inaugurate the great age, was born at Florence in 1265. Guido Guinicelli died in 1277, when Dante had completed his twelfth year. From 1249 until 1271, during the whole childhood of Dante, Enzo, King of Sardinia, Manfred's half-brother and Frederick II.'s son, remained a prisoner in the public palace of Bologna. In one of those years of preparation and transition, while the learned stanzas of Guido Guinicelli were preluding the 'new sweet style' of Tuscany, this yellow-haired scion of the Suabian princes, the progenitor of the Bentivogli, sent a song forth from his dungeon's *loggie* to greet the provinces of Italy:

Va, Canzonetta mia,  
 E saluta Messere,  
 Dilli lo mal ch' i' aggio.  
 Quella che m' ha in balia  
 Sì distretto mi tene,  
 Ch' eo viver non poraggio.  
 Salutami Toscana,

<sup>46</sup> *Purg.* xxiv.

<sup>47</sup> *Purg.* xxvi.

<sup>48</sup> *De Vulg. Eloq.* i. 15.

Quella ched è sovrana,  
 In cui regna tutta cortesia;  
 E vanne in Puglia piana,  
 La magna Capitanà,  
 Là dove è lo miocore notte e dia.

These lines sound a farewell to the old age and a salutation to the new. Enzo's heart is in the lowlands of Apulia and the great Capitanate, where his father built castles and fought mighty wars. He belongs, like his verses, like his race, like the chivalrous sentiments he had imbibed in youth, to the past; and now he is dreaming life away, a captive with the burghers of Bologna. Yet it is Tuscany for which he reserves the epithet of Sovereign—Tuscany where all courtesy holds sway. The situation is pathetic. The poem is a prophecy.

Raimond of Tours, one of the earlier French minnesingers, bade his friend seek hospitality 'in the noble city of the Florentines, named Florence; for it is there that joy and song and love are perfected with beauty crowned.'<sup>49</sup> The delicate living and graceful pastimes of Valdarno were famous throughout Europe. In the old French romance of 'Cleomades,' for example, we read a rhymed description of the games and banquets with which Florence welcomed May and June:<sup>50</sup>

Pour May et Gayn honorer;  
 Le May pour sa jolivité,  
 Et le Gayn pour la planté.

Villani, writing of the year 1283, when the Guelfs had triumphed and the nobles had been quelled, speaks thus of those festivities:<sup>51</sup> 'In this happy and fair state of ease and peaceful quiet so wealth-giving to merchants and artificers, and specially to the Guelfs, who ruled the land, there was formed in the quarter of S. Felicità beyond the Arno, where the family De' Rossi took the lead, together with their neighbourhood, a company or band of one thousand men and upwards, all attired in white, with a Lord named the Lord of Love. This band had no other purpose than to pass the time in games and solace, and in dances of ladies, knights and other people of the city, roaming the town with trumpets and divers instruments of music, in joy and gladness, and abiding together in banquets at midday and eventide.' From another chronicle it appears that this company was called the *Brigata bianca* or *Brigata amorosa*.<sup>52</sup> 'There,' says a rhymers who had seen the sports, 'might one behold the rich attire of silk and gold, of samite, white and blue and violet, with fair velvets; and trappings of all colours I beheld that day. The young men mid the women went with gaze fixed upon those eyes angelical, that turn the midnight into noon. Over their blond tresses the maidens wore gems and precious garlands; lilies, violets

<sup>49</sup> Fauriel, *Dante et les origines*, &c. (Paris, 1854), i. 269.

<sup>50</sup> D' Ancona, *La Poesia Popolare Italiana* (Livorno, 1878), p. 36, note.

<sup>51</sup> Giov. Vill. vii. 89.

<sup>52</sup> Stefani, quoted by D' Ancona, *op. cit.* p. 36.



and roses were their charming faces. You would not have said: "You are mortal beings." They rather seemed a thousand paradises.<sup>53</sup>

The amusements lasted two months, from May 1 until the end of the Midsummer feast of S. John, patron of Florence. Later on, we read of two companies, the one dressed in yellow, the other in white, each led by their King, who filled the city with the sound of music, and wore garlands on their heads, and spent their time in dances and banquets.<sup>54</sup>

Again, when the nobles, after the battle of Campaldino, had been finally suppressed, Villani once more returns to the subject of these companies, describing the booths of wood adorned with silken curtains, which were ranged along the streets and squares, for the accommodation of guests.<sup>55</sup> It will be observed that Villani connects the gladness of this season with the successive triumphs of the Guelph party and the suppression of the nobles by the Popolo. Not only was Florence freed from grave anxieties and heavy expenses, caused by the intramural quarrels between Counts and Burghers. But the city felt the advent of her own prosperity, the realisation of her true type, in their victorious close. Then the new noble class, the *popolani grassi*, assumed the gentle manners of chivalry, accommodating its customs to their own rich jovial ideal. Feudalism was extinguished; but society retained such portions of feudal customs as shed beauty upon common life. Tranquillity succeeded to strife, and the mediæval city presented a spectacle similar to that which an old Greek lyrist has described among the gifts of Peace:

To mortal men Peace giveth these good things:  
Wealth, and the flowers of honey-throated song;  
The flame that springs  
On carven altars from fat sheep and kine,  
Slain to the gods in heaven; and, all day long,  
Games for glad youths, and flutes, and wreaths, and circling wine.  
Then in the steely shield swart spiders weave  
Their web and dusky woof:  
Rust to the pointed spear and sword doth cleave;  
The brazen trump sounds no alarms;  
Nor is sleep harried from our eyes aloof,  
But with sweet rest my bosom warms:  
The streets are thronged with beauteous men and young,  
And hymns in praise of Love like flames to heaven are flung.

Goro di Stagio Dati, writing at the end of the fourteenth century, has preserved for us an animated picture of Florence in May.<sup>56</sup> 'When the season of spring appears to gladden all the world, every man be-thinks him how to make fair the day of S. John, which follows at mid-summer, and there is none but provides himself betimes with clothes and ornaments and jewels. Marriages and other joyous occasions are

<sup>53</sup> D' Ancona, *op. cit.* p. 37, note.

<sup>54</sup> Giov. Vill. x. 216.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.* vii. 132.

<sup>56</sup> *Storia di Firenze di Goro Dati* (Firenze, 1735), p. 84.

deferred until that time, to do the festival honour; and two months before the date, they begin to furnish forth the decorations of the races—dresses of varlets, banners, clarions, draperies, and candles, and whatsoever other offerings should be made. The whole city is in a bustle for the preparation of the Festa; and the hearts of young men and women, who take part therein, are set on nought but dancing, playing, singing, banqueting, jousting, and other fair amusements, as though nought else were to be done in those weeks before the coming of S. John's Eve.' The minute account of the ceremonies observed on S. John's Day which follows, need not be transcribed. Yet it may be well to call attention to a *quattrocento* picture in the Florentine Academy, which illustrates the customs of that festival. It is a long panel representing the marriage of an Adimari with a daughter of the Ricasoli. The Baptistery appears in the background; and on the piazza are ladies and young men, clad in damask and rich stuffs, with jewels and fantastic head-dresses, joining hands as though in act of dancing. Under the Loggia del Bigallo sit the trumpeters of the Signory, blowing clarions adorned with pennons. The lily of Florence is on these trappings. Serving men carry vases and basins toward the Adimari palace, in preparation for the wedding feast. A large portion of the square is covered in with a white and red awning.

If the chroniclers and painters enable us to form some conception of Florentine festivity, we are introduced to the persons and pastimes of these jovial companies by the poet Folgore da San Gemignano.<sup>57</sup> Two sets of his Sonnets have been preserved, the one upon the Months, addressed to the leader of a noble Sienese company; the other on the Days, to a member of a similar Florentine society. If we are right in reckoning Folgore among the poets of the thirteenth century, the facility and raciness of his style, its disengagement from Provençalising pedantry, and the irony of his luxurious hedonism, prove to what extent the Tuscans had already left the middle age behind them.<sup>58</sup> Folgore, in spite of his spring fragrance and auroral freshness, anticipates the spirit

<sup>57</sup> The date commonly assigned to Folgore is 1260, and the Niccolò he addresses in his series on the Months has been identified with that

'Niccolò, che la costuma ricca  
Del garofano prima discoperse,'

so ungently handled by Dante in the *Inferno*, Canto xxix. I am aware that grave doubts, based upon historical allusions in Folgore's miscellaneous sonnets, have been raised as to whether we can assign so early a date to Folgore, and whether his Brigata was really the *brigata godereccia*, *spendereccia*, of Siena alluded to by Dante. See Bartoli, *Storia della Letteratura Italiana*, vol. ii. cap. 11, for a discussion of these points. See also Giulio Navone's edition of Folgore's and Cene's *Rime*, Bologna, Romagnoli, 1880. This editor argues forcibly for a later date—not earlier at all events than from 1300 to 1320. But, whether we choose the earlier date 1260 or the later 1315, Folgore may legitimately be used for my present purpose of illustration.

<sup>58</sup> This is equally true of Cene dalla Chitarra's satirical parodies of the Months, in which, using the same rhymes as Folgore, he turns each of his motives to ridicule. Cene was a poet of Arezzo. His series and Folgore's will both be found in the *Poeti del Primo Secolo*, vol. ii., and in Navone's edition cited above.

of the Renaissance. He is a thirteenth-century Boccaccio, without Boccaccio's enthusiasm for humane studies. Ideal love, asceticism, religion, the virtues of the Christian and the knight, are not for him. His soul is set on the enjoyment of the hour. But this materialism, is presented in a form of art so temperate, with colours so refined and outlines so delicately drawn, that there is nothing repulsive in it. His selfishness and sensuality are related to Aretino's as the miniatures of a missal to Giulio Romano's Modes of Venus.<sup>59</sup>

In his sonnets on the Months, Folgore addresses the Brigata as 'valiant and courteous above Lancelot, ready, if need were, with lance in rest, to spur along the lists of Camelot.' In January he gives them good fires and warm chambers, silken coverlids for their beds, and fur cloaks, and sometimes in the day to sally forth and snowball girls upon the square:

Uscir di fora alcuna volta il giorno,  
Gittando della neve bella e bianca  
A le donzelle, che staran dattorno.

February brings the pleasures of the chase. March is good for fishing, with merry friends at night, and never a friar to be seen:

Lasciate predicar i Frati pazzi,  
Ch' hanno troppe bugie e poco vero.

In April the 'gentle country all abloom with fair fresh grass' invites the young men forth. Ladies shall go with them, to ride, display French dresses, dance Provençal figures, or touch new instruments from Germany, or roam through spacious parks. May brings in tournaments and showers of blossoms—garlands and oranges flung from balcony and window—girls and youths saluting with kisses on cheeks and lips:

E pulzellette, giovane, e garzoni  
Basciarsi nella bocca e nelle guance;  
D' amore e di goder vi si ragioni.

<sup>59</sup> These remarks have to be qualified by reference to an unfinished set of five sonnets (Navone's edition, pp. 45-49), which are composed in a somewhat different key. They describe the arming of a young knight, and his reception by Valour, Humility, Discretion, and Gladness. Yet the knight, so armed and accepted, is no Galahad, far less the grim horseman of Dürer's allegory. Like the members of the *brigata godereccia*, he is rather a Gawain or Astolfo, all love, fine clothes, and courtship. Each of these five sonnets is a precious little miniature of Italian carpet-chivalry. The quaintest is the second, which begins:

'Ecco prodezza che tosto lo spoglia,  
E dice: amico e' convien che tu nudi,  
Per ciò ch' i' vo' veder li uomini nudi,  
E vo' che sappi non abbo altra voglia.'

This exordium makes one regret that the painter of the young knight in our National Gallery (Giorgione?) had not essayed a companion picture. Valour disrobing him and taking him into her arms and crying *Queste carni m' ai offerte* would have made a fine pictorial allegory.

In June the company of youths and maidens quit the city for the villa, passing their time in shady gardens, where the fountains flow and freshen the fine grass, and all the folk shall be love's servants. July finds them in town again, avoiding the sun's heat and wearing silken raiment in cool chambers where they feast. In August they are off to the hills, riding at morn and eve from castle to castle, through upland valleys where streams flow. September is the month of hawking; October of fowling and midnight balls. With November and December winter comes again, and brings the fireside pleasures of the town. On the whole, there is too much said of eating and drinking in these sonnets; and the series concludes with a piece of inhumane advice:

E beffe far dei tristi cattivelli,  
E miseri cattivi sciagurati  
Avari: non vogliate usar con elli.

The sonnets on the Days breathe the same quaint mediæval hedonism.<sup>60</sup> Monday is the day of songs and love; our young man must be up betimes, to make his mistress happy:

Levati su, donzello, e non dormire;  
Chè l' amoroso giorno ti conforta,  
E vuol che vadi tua donna a fruire.

Tuesday is the day of battles and pitched fields; but these are described in mock-heroics, which show what the poet really felt about the pleasure of them. Wednesday is the day of banquets, when ladies and girls are waited on by young men wearing amorous wreaths:

E donzelletti gioveni garzoni  
Servir, portando amorose ghirlande.

Thursday is the day of jousts and tourneys; Friday of hounds and horses; Saturday, of hawks and fowling-nets; Sunday, of 'dances and feats of arms in Florence':

Danzar donzelli, armeggiar cavalieri,  
Cercar Fiorenza per ogni contrada,  
Per piazze, per giardini, e per verzieri.

<sup>60</sup> If I were writing the history of early Tuscan poetry, I should wish here to compare the rarely beautiful poem of Lapo Gianni, *Amor eo chero*, with Folgore, and the masterly sonnets of Cecco Angiolieri of Siena, especially the one beginning *S' io fossi fuoco*, with Cene dalla Chitarra, in order to prove the fulness of sensuous and satirical inspiration in the age preceding Dante. Lapo wishes he had the beauty of Absalom, the strength of Samson; that the Arno would run balm for him, her walls be turned to silver and her paving-stones to crystal; that he might abide in eternal summer gardens among thousands of the loveliest women, listening to the songs of birds and instruments of music. The voluptuousness of Folgore is here heightened to ecstasy. Cecco desires to be fire, wind, sea, God, that he might ruin the world; the emperor, that he might decapitate its population; death, that he might seek out his father and mother; life, that he might fly from both; being Cecco, he would fain take all fair women, and leave the foul to his neighbours. The spite of Cene is deepened to insanity.

Such then was the joyous living, painted with colours of the fancy by a Tuscan poet, and realised in Florence at the close of that eventful century which placed the city under Guelf rule, in the plenitude of peace, equality, and wealth by sea and land. Distinctions of class had been obliterated: The whole population enjoyed equal rights and equal laws. No man was idle; and though the simplicity of the past, praised by Dante and Villani, was yielding to luxury, still the pleasure-seekers were controlled by that fine taste which made the Florentines a race of artists.<sup>61</sup> This halcyon season was the boyhood of Dante and Giotto, the prime of Arnolfo and Cimabue. The buildings whereby the City of the Flower is still made beautiful above all cities of Italian soil, were rising. The people abode in industry and order beneath the sway of their elected leaders. Supreme in Tuscany, fearing no internal feuds, strong in their militia of thirty thousand burghers to repel a rival State, the Florentines had reached the climax of political prosperity. Not as yet had arisen that little cloud, no bigger than a man's hand, above Pistoja, which was destined to plunge them into the strife of Blacks and Whites. During that interval of windless calm, in that fair city, where the viol and the lute were never silent through spring-tide and summer, the star of Italian poetry, that 'crowning glory of unblemished wealth,' went up and filled the heavens with light.

<sup>61</sup> See *Paradiso*, xv.; Giov. Vill. vi. 69.

## CHAPTER II

### THE TRIUMVIRATE

*Chivalrous Poetry—Ideal of Chivalrous Love—Bolognese Erudition—New Meaning given to the Ideal—Metaphysics of the Florentine School of Lyricists—Guido Cavalcanti—Philosophical Poems—Popular Songs—Cino of Pistoia—Dante's 'Vita Nuova'—Beatrice in the 'Convito' and the 'Paradiso'—The Preparation for the 'Divine Comedy' in Literature—Allegory—The 'Divine Comedy'—Petrarch's Position in Life—His Conception of Humanism—Conception of Italy—His Treatment of Chivalrous Love—Beatrice and Laura—The 'Canzoniere'—Boccaccio, the Florentine Bourgeois—His Point of View—His Abandonment of the Chivalrous Standpoint—His Devotion to Art—Anticipates the Renaissance—The 'Decameron'—'Commedia Umana'—Precursors of Boccaccio—Novels—'Carmina Vagorum'—Plan of the Book—Its Moral Character—The 'Visione Amorosa'—Boccaccio's Descriptions—The 'Teseide'—The 'Rime'—The 'Filocolo'—The 'Filostrato'—The 'Ameto,' 'Fiammetta,' 'Ninfale,' 'Corbaccio'—Prose before Boccaccio—'Fioretti di San Francesco' and 'Decameron' compared—Influence of Boccaccio over the Prose Style of the Renaissance—His Death—Close of the Fourteenth Century—Sacchetti's Lament.*

THE Sicilians followed closely in the track of the Provençal poets. After, or contemporaneously with them, the same Italo-Provençal literature was cultivated in the cities of central Italy. The subject-matter of this imitative poetry was love—but love that bore a peculiar relation to ordinary human feeling. Woman was regarded as an ideal being, to be approached with worship bordering on adoration. The lover derived personal force, virtue, elevation, energy, from his enthusiastic passion. Honour, justice, courage, self-sacrifice, contempt of worldly goods, flowed from that one sentiment; and love united two wills in a single ecstasy. Love was the consummation of spiritual felicity, which surpassed all other modes of happiness in its beatitude. Thus Bernard de Ventadour and Jacopo da Lentino were ready to forego Paradise unless they might behold their lady's face before the throne of God. For a certain period in modern history, this mysticism of the amorous emotion was no affectation. It formulated a genuine impulse of manly hearts, inflamed by beauty, and touched with the sense of moral superiority in woman, perfected through weakness and demanding physical protection. By bringing the cruder passions into accord with gentle manners and unselfish aspirations, it served to temper the rudeness of primitive society; and no little of its attraction was due to the conviction that only refined natures could experience it. This new aspect of love was due to chivalry, to Christianity, to the Teutonic reverence for women, in which religious awe seems to have blended with the service of the weaker by the stronger.

Sincere and beautiful as the ideal of chivalrous love may have been, it speedily degenerated. Chivalry, though a vital element of feudalism, existed, even among the nations of its origin, more as an aspiration than a reality. In Italy it never penetrated the life or subdued the imagination of the people. For the Italo-Provençal poets that code of love was almost wholly formal. They found it ready made. They used it because the culture of a Court, in sympathy with feudal Europe, left them no other choice. Not Arthur, but the Virgilian Æneas, was still the Italian hero; and instead of S. Louis, the nations of the South could only boast of a crusading Frederick II. Frederick the troubadour was a no less anomalous being than Frederick the crusader. He conformed to contemporary fashion, but his spirit ran counter to the age. Curiosity, incipient humanism, audacious doubt, the toleration which inclined him to fraternise with Saracens and seek the learning of the Arabs, placed him outside the sphere of thirteenth-century conceptions. His expedition to the East appears a mere parade excursion, hypocritical, political, ironical. In like manner his love-poetry and that of his courtiers ring hollow in our ears.

It harmonised with the Italian genius, when Guido Guinicelli treated chivalrous love from the standpoint of Bolognese learning. He altered none of the forms; he used the conventional phraseology. But he infused a new spirit into the subject-matter. His poetry ceased to be formal; the phrases were no longer verbiage. The epicureanism of Frederick's life clashed with the mystic exaltation of knighthood. There was no discord between Guido's scientific habit of mind and his expression of a philosophical idea conveyed in terms of amorous enthusiasm. Upon his lips the words:

Al cor gentil ripara sempre Amore,  
Come l' augello in selva alla verdura;  
Nè fe' Amore anti che gentil core,  
Nè gentil cor anti che Amor, Natura:

acquire reality—not the reality of passion, but of sincere thought. They do not convey the spontaneity of feeling, but a philosopher's contemplation of love and beauty in their influence on human character. Guido's mood might be compared with that of the Greek sage, when he exclaimed that neither the morning nor the evening star is so wonderful as Justice, or when he thus apostrophised Virtue:

Virtue, to men thou bringest care and toil;  
Yet art thou life's best, fairest spoil!  
O virgin goddess, for thy beauty's sake  
To die is delicate in this our Greece,  
Or to endure of pain the stern, strong ache.

For the chivalrous races, Love had been an enthusiastic ideal. For the Italy-Provençal euphuists it supplied an artificial inspiration. At Bologna it became the form of transcendental science; and here the Italian



intellect touched, by accident or instinct, the same note that had been struck by Plato in the 'Phædrus' and 'Symposium.'

A public trained in legal and scholastic studies, whose mental furniture was drawn from S. Thomas and Accursius, hailed their poet in Guido Guinicelli. For them it was natural that poetry should veil philosophy with verse; that love should be confounded with the movement of the soul toward truth; that beauty should be treated as the manifestation of a spiritual good. Dante in his Canzone, 'Donne ch' avete intelletto d' amore,' appeals, not to emotion, but to intelligence. He tells us that *understanding* was the ancient name of *love*, and describes the effect of passion in a young man's heart as a revelation raising him above the level of common experience. Thus the transmutation of the simpler elements of the chivalrous code into philosophical doctrine, where the form of the worshipped lady transcends the sphere of sense, and her spirit is identified with the lover's deepest thought and loftiest aspiration, was sincere in mediæval Florence. The Tuscan intellect was too virile and sternly strung to be satisfied with amorous rhymes. The contemporary theory of æsthetics demanded allegory, and imposed upon the poet erudition; nor was it easy for the singer of that epoch to command his own immediate emotions, or to use them for the purposes of a direct and plastic art. Enjoying neither the freedom of the Greek nor the disengagement of the modern spirit, he found it more proper to clothe a scientific content with the veil of passion, than to paint the personality of the woman he loved with natural precision. Between the mysticism of a sublime but visionary adoration on the one side, and the sensualities of vulgar appetite or the decencies of married life on the other, there lay for him no intermediate artistic region. He understood the love of the imagination and the love of the senses; but the love of the heart, familiar to the Northern races, hardly existed for him.

And here it may be parenthetically noticed that the Italians, in the middle ages, created no feminine ideal analogous to Gudrun or Chriemhild, Iseult or Guinevere. When they left the high region of symbolism, they descended almost without modulation to the prose of common life. Thus the Selvaggia of Cino, the Beatrice of Dante, the Laura of Petrarch, made way for the Fiammetta of Boccaccio and the women of the 'Decameron,' when that ecstasy of earlier enthusiasm was exhausted. For a while, however, the Florentines were well prepared to give an intellectual significance, and with it a new life, to the outworn conventions of the Italo-Provençal lyrists. Nor must it be thought that the emotions thus philosophised were unreal. Dante loved Beatrice, though she became for him an allegory. The splendid vision of her beauty and goodness attended him through life, assuming the guidance of his soul in all its stages. Difficult as it may be to comprehend this blending of the real and transcendental, we must grasp it if we desire to penetrate the spirit of the fourteenth century in Italy.

The human heart remains unchanged. No metaphysical sophistica-

tion, no allegory, no scholastic mysticism, can destroy the spontaneity of instinct in a man who loves, or cloud a poet's vision. Love does not cease to be love because it is sublimed to the quintessence of a self-denying passion. It still retains its life in feeling, and its root in sense. Beauty does not cease to be beautiful because it has been moralised and identified with the attraction that lifts men upward to the sphere of the eternal truths. Nor is poetry extinguished because the singer deems it his vocation to utter genuine thought, and scorns the rhyming pastimes of the simple amorist. The Florentine school presents us with a poetry which aimed at being philosophical, but which at the same time vibrated with life and delineated moods of delicate emotion. To effect a flawless fusion between these two strains in the new style, was infinitely difficult; nor were the poets of that epoch equally successful. Guido Cavalcanti, the leader of the group which culminates in Dante, won his fame by verse that savours more of the dialectician than the singer. Ranking science above poetry, he is said to have disdained even Virgil. His odes are drily scholastic—especially that famous 'Donna mi priega,' which contemporaries studied clause by clause, and which, after two centuries, served Dino del Garbo for the text of a metaphysical discourse.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, certain lyrics, composed in a lighter mood by the same poet, have in them the essence of spontaneous and natural inspiration. His Ballate were probably regarded by himself and his friends as playthings, thrown off in idle moments to distract a mind engaged in thorny speculations. Yet we find here the first full blossom of genuine Italian verse. Their beauty is that of popular song, starting flowerlike from the soil, and fragrant in its first expansion beneath the sun of courtesy and culture. Nothing remained, in this kind, for Boccaccio and Poliziano, but to echo the Ballata of the country maidens, and to complete the welcome to the May.<sup>2</sup>

Two currents of verse, the one rising from the senses, the other from the brain, the one deriving force and fulness from the people, the other nourished by the schools, flowed apart in Guido Cavalcanti's poetry. They were combined into a single stream by Cino da Pistoja.<sup>3</sup> Cino was a jurist of encyclopædic erudition, as well as a sweet and fluent singer.<sup>4</sup> His verses have the polish and something of the chill of marble.

<sup>1</sup> *Rime di Guido Cavalcanti, edite ed inedite*, &c. Firenze, 1813. See p. 29 for the Canzone, and p. 73 for a translation into Italian of Dino's Latin commentary.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.* pp. 21-27. Two in particular, *Era in pensier* and *Gli occhi di quella gentil forosetta*, may be singled out. A *pastourelle*, *In un boschetto*, anticipates the manner of Sacchetti. As for the May song, its opening lines, *Ben venga Maggio*, &c., are referred by Carducci to Guido Cavalcanti.

<sup>3</sup> See *Vita e Poesie di Messer Cino da Pistoja*, Pisa, Capurro, 1813. Also Barbèra's diamond edition of Cino da Pistoja and other poets, edited by Carducci.

<sup>4</sup> The tomb of Cino in the Duomo at Pistoja, with its Gothic canopies and the bas-reliefs which represent a Doctor of Laws lecturing to men of all ranks and ages at their desks beneath his professorial chair, is a fine contemporary monument. The great jurist is here commemorated, not the master of Petrarch in the art of song.

His Selvaggia deserves a place with Beatrice and Laura. From Cino Petrarch derived his mastery of limpid diction. In Cino the artistic sense of the Italians awoke. He produced something distinct both from the scientific style of Guido Guinicelli, and also from the wilding song which Guido Cavalcanti's Ballate echoed. He seems to have applied himself to the main object of polishing poetical diction, and rendering expression at once musical and lucid.<sup>5</sup> Though his hold upon ideas was not so firm as Cavalcanti's, nor his passion so intense, he achieved a fusion of thought and feeling in an artistic whole of sympathetic suavity. We instinctively compare his work with that of Mino da Fiesole in bas-relief.

Dante was five years older than Cino. To him belongs the glory of having effected the same fusion in a lyric poetry at once more comprehensive and more lofty. Dante yields no point as a dialectician and subtle thinker to Guido Cavalcanti. He surpasses Cino da Pistoja as an artist. His passion and imagination are more fiery than Guido's. His tenderness is deeper and more touching than Cino's. Even in those minor works with which he preluded the 'Divine Comedy,' Dante soars above all competition, taking rank among the few poets born to represent an age and be the everlasting teachers of the human soul. Yet even Dante, though knowing that he was destined to eclipse both the Guidi, though claiming Love alone for his inspirer, was not wholly free from the scholasticism of his century. In the earlier lyrics of the 'Vita Nuova' and in the Canzoni of the 'Convito,' he allows his feeling to be over-weighted by the scientific content. Between his emotion and our sympathy there rises, now and again, the mist of metaphysic. While giving them intenser meaning, he still plays upon the commonplaces of his predecessors. Thus in the sonnet 'Amor e 'l cor gentil son una cosa' he rehandles Guinicelli's theme; while the following stanza repeats the well-worn doctrine that Love should be the union of beauty and of excellence:<sup>6</sup>

Che la beltà che Amore in voi consente,  
A virtù solamente  
Formata fu dal suo decreto antico,  
Contro lo qual fallate.  
Io dico a voi che siete innamorate,  
Che se beltate a voi  
Fu data, e virtù a noi,  
Ed a costui di due potere un fare,  
Voi non dovreste amare,  
Ma coprir quanto di beltà vi è dato,  
Poichè non è virtù, ch' era suo segno.

Dante's concessions to the mannerism of the school weigh as nothing in the scales against the beauty and the truth of that most spiritual

<sup>5</sup> Cp. Dante *De Vulg. Eloq.* i. 17, upon Cino's purification of Italian from vulgarisms, with Lorenzo de' Medici, who calls Cino 'tutto delicato e veramente amoroso, il quale primo, al mio parere, cominciò l' antico rozzore in tutto a schifare.' *Lettera all' illustr. Sig. Federigo*, Poesie (ed. Barbèra, 1858), p. 33.

<sup>6</sup> *Il Canzoniere* (Fraticelli's edition), p. 199.

of romances, to which the 'Vita Nuova' gives melodic utterance. Within the compass of one little book is bound up all that Florence in the thirteenth century contributed to the refinement of mediæval manners, together with all that the new school of poets had imagined of highest in their philosophical conception. The harmony of life and science attains completion in the real but idealised experience, which transcends and combines both motives in a personality uniquely constituted for this blending. It is enough for the young Dante to meet Beatrice, to pass her among her maidens in the city-ways, to receive her salute, to admire her moving through the many-coloured crowd, to meditate upon her apparition, as of one of God's angels, in the solitude of his chamber. She is a dream, a vision. But it is the dream of his existence, the vision that unfolds for him the universe—more actual, more steeped in emotion, more stimulative of sublime aspiration and virile purpose than many loves which find fruition in long years of intercourse. We feel that the man's true self has been revealed to him; that he has given his life-blood to the ideal which, without this nourishment, would have ranked among phantoms, but is now reality. Students who have not followed the stages through which the doctrine of chivalrous love reached Dante, and the process whereby it was transmuted into science for the guidance of the soul, will regard the records of the 'Vita Nuova' as shadowy or sentimental. Or if they only dwell upon the philosophical aspect of Dante's work, if they do not make allowance for the natural stirring of a heart that throbbed with liveliest feeling, they will fail to comprehend this book, at once so complex and so simple. The point lies exactly in the fusion of two elements—in the truth of the passion, the truth of the idealisation, and the spontaneity of the artistic form combining them. What is most intelligible, because most common to all phases of profound emotion, in the 'Vita Nuova,' is its grief—the poet's sympathy with Beatrice in the house of mourning for her father's death, the vision of her own passage from earth to heaven, and the apostrophe to the pilgrims who thread the city clothed with mourning for her loss.<sup>7</sup> No one, reading these poems, will doubt that, though Beatrice did but cross the path of Dante's life and shed her brightness on it for a season from afar, the thought of her had penetrated heart and fibre, making him a man new-born through love, and striking in his soul a note that should resound through all his years, through all the centuries which grow to understand him.

Dante was born in 1265 of poor but noble parents, who reconciled themselves to the Guelf party. He first saw Beatrice in his ninth year; and, when a man, he well remembered how her beauty dawned upon him.<sup>8</sup> 'Her dress, on that day, was of a most noble colour, a subdued and goodly crimson, girdled and adorned in such sort as best suited with her very tender age. At that moment, I say most truly that the spirit of life, which hath its dwelling in the secretest chamber of the

<sup>7</sup> *Voi che portate; Donna pietosa; Deh peregrini.*

<sup>8</sup> See Rossetti's translation of the *Vita Nuova*.

heart, began to tremble so violently that the least pulses of my body shook therewith; and in trembling it said these words: *Ecce deus fortior me, qui veniens dominabitur mihi.*' Beatrice died in 1290, and Dante closed the 'Vita Nuova' with these words<sup>9</sup>: 'It was given unto me to behold a very wonderful vision; wherein I saw things which determined me that I would say nothing further of this most blessed one, until such time as I could discourse more worthily concerning her. And to this end I labour all I can; as she well knoweth. Wherefore if it be His pleasure through whom is the life of all things, that my life continue with me a few years, it is my hope that I shall yet write concerning her what hath not before been written of any woman. After the which, may it seem good unto Him who is the Master of Grace, that my spirit should go hence to behold the glory of its lady: to wit, of that blessed Beatrice who now gazeth continually on His countenance *qui est per omnia sæcula benedictus. Laus Deo.*'

This passage was written possibly in Dante's twenty-eighth year. The consecration of his younger manhood was the love of Beatrice. She made him a poet. Through her came to him the 'sweet new style,' which shone with purest lustre in his verse; and the songs he made of Beatrice were known through all the City of the Flower. Yet love had not absorbed his energies. He studied under Brunetto Latini, and qualified himself for the career of a Florentine citizen by entering the Guild of Speziali. After Beatrice's death a great and numbing sorrow fell upon him. From this eclipse he recovered by the help of reading, and also by the distractions of public life. He fought in the battle of Campaldino, and married his wife Gemma Donati. He went as ambassador to San Gimignano in 1299; and in the year 1300, when Florence was divided by the parties of Cerchi and Donati, he fulfilled the functions of the Priorate. These ten years between Beatrice's death and Dante's election as Prior were a period of hesitation and transition. He was no longer the poet of Divine Love, inspired by spontaneous emotion, mastering and glorifying the form which tradition imposed on verse. He had become a student of philosophy; and this change makes itself felt in the more abstruse and abstract odes of the 'Convito.' Yet he was still attended, through those years of study, civic engagements and domestic duties, by the vision of Beatrice. This is how he speaks of science in the second part of the 'Convito': 'After some time my mind, which strove to regain strength, bethought itself (since neither my own consolations nor those of friends availed me aught) of having recourse to the method which had helped to comfort other spirits in distress. I took to reading the book, not known to many students, of Boethius, wherewith, unhappy and in exile, he had comforted himself. And hearing also that Tully had written another book in which, while treating of friendship, he had used words of consolation to Lælius in the death of his friend Scipio, I read that also, and as it happens that a man goes seeking silver, and far from his design finds gold, which hidden

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

causes yield him, not perchance without God's guidance, so I who sought for consolation found not only comfort for my tears, but also words of authors and of sciences and of books, weighing the which, I judged well that philosophy, the lady of these authors, of these sciences and of these books, was a thing supreme. And I imagined her in fashion like a gentle lady, nor could I fancy her otherwise than piteous; wherefore so truly did I gaze upon her with adoring eyes that scarcely could I turn myself away. And having thus imagined her I began to go where she displayed her very self, that is in the schools of the religious, and the disputations of philosophers; so that in short time, about thirty months, I began so much to feel her sweetness that her love chased away and destroyed all other thought in me.'

Beatrice, who in her lifetime had been the revelation of beauty and all good, lifting her lover above the region of sordid thoughts, and opening a sphere of spiritual intelligence, now accompanied him through the labyrinths of speculation. She was still the form, the essence, of all he learned; and the vow which closes the 'Vita Nuova' had not been forgotten.

Through the transition period, marked by the 'Convito,' we are led to the third stage of Dante's life—those twenty-one years, during which he roamed in exile over Italy, and wrote the poem of mediæval Christianity. The studies of which the 'Convito' forms a fragment, and the political career which ended in the embassy to Boniface, were both necessary for the 'Divine Comedy.' Had it not been for Dante's exile, the modern world might have lacked its first and greatest epic; Beatrice might have missed her promised apotheosis. As her hand had guided him through the paths of love and the labyrinths of science, so now the brightness of her glorified face lifted him from sphere to sphere of Paradise. By gazing on her eyes, he rose through heaven, and stood with her before the splendour of the Beatific Vision. To identify Beatrice with Theology in this last stage of Dante's spiritual life is a facile but inadequate expedient of criticism. From the earliest she had been for him the light and guidance of his soul; and at the last he ascribed to her the best and the sublimest of his inspirations.

Since its origin Italian poetry had pursued one line of evolution, first following and then transmuting the traditions of Provence. In the 'Divine Comedy' it took a new direction. Chivalry, insufficient for the nation and ill-adapted to its temper, yielded to a motive force derived from the religious sentiment. The Bible history, the Lives of the Saints, and the doctrine of the Church concerning the future of mankind, together with the emotions of piety, had hitherto received but partial exposition at the hands of a few poets of the people. S. Francis struck the keynote of popular Italian poetry in his 'Cantico del Sole,' which can be accepted as the first specimen of composition in the vulgar tongue. Guittone of Arezzo, already mentioned as the earliest learned poet who attempted to nationalise his style, acquired fame as the writer of one sublime sonnet to Madonna and two Canzoni

to the Mother and her Son.<sup>10</sup> But the most decisive impulse toward religious poetry was given by the Flagellants, who, starting from the Umbrian highlands in 1290, diffused their peculiar devotion over Italy. I shall have occasion to return in a future chapter to the history of this movement and to trace its influence over popular Italian literature. It is enough, at present, to have mentioned it among the forces tending toward religious poetry upon the close of the thirteenth century.

The spirit of the epoch inclined to Allegory and Vision. When we remember the prestige of Virgil in the middle ages, both as a philosopher and also as the precursor of Christianity, it will be understood how his descent into Hades fascinated the imagination, and prepared the mind to accept the Vision as a proper form for conveying theological doctrine.<sup>11</sup> The Journey of S. Brandan, the Purgatory of S. Patrick, and the Visions of Tundalus and Alberic pretended to communicate information concerning the soul's state after death, the places of punishment, and the method of salvation. In course of time the Vision was used for political or ecclesiastical purposes by preachers who averred that they had seen the souls of eminent sinners in torment. It became an engine of terrorism, assumed satiric tone, and finally fell into the hands of didactic or merely fanciful poets.<sup>12</sup>

The chief preoccupation of the mediæval mind was with the future destiny of man. This life came to be regarded as a preparation for eternity. Like a foreground, the actual world served to relieve the picture of the world beyond the grave. Therefore popular literature abounded in manuals of devotion and discipline, some of which set forth the history of the soul in allegorical form. Among other examples may be cited three stories of the spiritual life, corresponding to its three stages of Nature, Purification, and Restoration, conveyed under the titles of "Umano," "Spoglia," "Rinuova." Many prelusions of this class were combined in one religious drama called "Commedia dell' Anima," the substance of which is certainly old, though the form yields evidence of sixteenth-century *rifacimento*.<sup>13</sup>

The object of the foregoing paragraphs has been to show that the popular intellect was well prepared for religious poetry, and had appropriated the forms of Allegory and Vision. Not in order to depreciate

<sup>10</sup> *Donna del cielo; O benigna, o dolce; O bon Gesù*. See *Rime di Fra Guittone d'Arezzo* (Firenze, Morandi, 1828), vol. ii. pp. 212, 213; vol. i. p. 61.

<sup>11</sup> Not only the sixth *Æneid*, but the *Dream of Scipio* also, influenced the mediæval imagination. The Biblical visions, whether allegorical like those of Ezekiel and Paul, or apocalyptic like S. John's, exercised a similar control.

<sup>12</sup> See the little book of curious learning by Alessandro d' Ancona, entitled *I Precursori di Dante*, Firenze, Sansoni, 1874.

<sup>13</sup> See De Sanctis, *Storia della Letteratura Italiana*, vol. i. chap. 5. Of the *Commedia Spirituale dell' Anima* I have seen a Siennese copy of the date 1608, a reprint from some earlier Florentine edition. The Comedy is introduced by two boys, good and bad. The piece itself brings God as the Creator, the soul He has made, its guardian angel, the devil, the powers of Memory, Reason, Will, and all the virtues in succession, with corresponding vices, on the scene. It ends with the soul's judgment after death and final marriage to Christ. Dramatically, it is almost devoid of merit.



the originality of Dante, but to prove in how vital a relation he stood toward his age, I have here insisted on those formless preludes to his work of art. In the Epistle to Can Grande he thus explains the theme of the 'Commedia': 'The subject of the whole work, taken literally, is the state of souls after death, regarded as fact; for the action deals with this, and is about this. But if the work be taken allegorically, its subject is man, in so far as by merit or demerit in the exercise of free will he is exposed to the rewards or punishments of justice.' Attending to the letter, we find in the 'Commedia' a vision of that life beyond the tomb, in relation to which alone our life on earth has value. It presents a picture of the everlasting destiny of souls, so firmly apprehended and vividly imagined by the mediæval fancy. But since this picture has to set forth mysteries seen and heard by none, the revelation itself, like S. John's Apocalypse, is conveyed in symbols fashioned to adumbrate the truths perceived by faith. The same symbols portray another reality, not apprehended merely by faith, but brought home to the heart by experience. Attending to the allegory, we find in the 'Commedia' a history of the soul in this life—an ethical analysis of sin, purgation and salvation through grace. The poem is a narrative of Dante's journey through the region into which all pass after death; but at the same time it describes the hell and heaven and the transition through repentance from sin to grace, which are the actual conditions of the soul in this life. The 'Inferno' depicts unmitigated evil. The 'Paradiso' exhibits goodness, absolute and free from stain. In the one there is no relief, in the other no alloy; the one is darkness, the other light. The intermediate region of the 'Purgatorio' is a realm of expectation and conversion, where sin is no longer possible, but where the fruition of goodness is delayed by the necessity of purification. Here then are the natural alternations of day and night, the relative twilight of a world where all is yet transition rather than fulfilment. It may be observed that Purgatory belongs to the order of things which by their nature pass away; while Hell and Heaven are both eternal. Therefore the 'Commedia,' considered as an apocalypse of the undying soul, reveals absolute damnation and absolute salvation, both states being destined to endure so long as God's justice and love exist; but it also reveals a state of purifying pain, which ceases when the men who need it have been numbered. Considered as an allegory of the spiritual life on earth, it describes the process of escape from eternal condemnation through grace into eternal happiness.

A theme so vast and all-embracing enabled Dante to inform the whole knowledge of his epoch. The 'Commedia' is the poem of that scholastic theology which absorbed every branch of science and brought the world within the scope of one thought, God. As the 'Summa' of S. Thomas combined philosophy and revelation, so Dante included both the Pagan and Christian dispensations in his scheme. He starts from the wood of error, where men are assailed by the wild beasts of their passions; and two guides lead him, by the light of knowledge, up to God.

The one is Virgil, the other Beatrice—Virgil, who stands for human reason, science, the four cardinal virtues; Beatrice, who symbolises divine grace, faith formulated in theology, the virtues bestowed on man through Christ for his salvation. Virgil cannot lead the poet beyond Purgatory; because thus far only is human knowledge of avail to elevate and guide the soul. Beatrice lifts him through the spheres of Paradise by contemplation; because the highest summit attained by reason and natural virtue is but the starting-point of the true Christian's journey.

The 'Commedia' is thus the drama or the epos of the soul. It condenses all that man has thought or done, can think or do; all that he knows about the universe around him, all that he hopes or fears from the future; his intuition of an incorruptible and ideal order, underlying and controlling the phenomenal world. God, the world and man are brought into one focus; and the interest of the poem is the relation of the individual soul to them, the participation of each human personality in the dramatic action. It need hardly be observed that Dante's solutions of the problems which arise in the development of this theme, are mediæval. His physical science has been superseded. His theology is far from approving itself to the general consciousness of Christians in our age. Yet while all must recognise this obvious truth, the essence of the 'Commedia' is indestructible because of its humanity, because of the personality which animates it. Men change far less than the hypotheses of religion and philosophy, which take form from experience as shadows fly before the sun. However these may alter, man remains substantially the same; and Dante penetrated human nature as few have done—was such a man as few have been. The unity and permanence of his poem are in himself. Never was a plan so vast and various permeated so completely with a single self. At once creator and spectator of his vision, neophyte and hierophant, arraigned and judge, he has not only seen hell as the local prison-house of pain, but has felt it as the state of sin within his heart. He has passed through purifying fires; and the songs of Paradise have sounded by anticipation in his ears. Dante is both the singer and the hero of his epic. In him the universal idea of mankind becomes concrete. The continuous experience of this living person, who is at one and the same time a figure of each and every soul that ever breathed, and also the real Dante Alighieri, exile from Florence without blame, sustains as on one thread the medley of successive motives which else might lack poetic unity, gives life to a scheme which else might be too abstract. Expanding to embrace the universe, contracting to a point within one breast, the 'Commedia' combines the general and the particular in an individual commensurate with man.

It may be conjectured that Dante, obeying the scholastic impulse of his age, started from the abstract or universal. Therein lay the reality of things, not in the particular. What has been already quoted from the letter to Can Grande justifies this supposition. He meant to lay bare the scheme of the universe, as understood by mediæval

Christianity, and viewed from the standpoint of the human agent. That scheme presented itself in a series of propositions, a logic or a metaphysic apprehended as truth. Each portion of the poem was mapped out with rigorous accuracy. Each section illustrated a thought, an argument, a position. The whole might be surveyed as a structure of connected syllogisms. To this scientific articulation of its leading motives corresponds the architectural symmetry, the simple outlines and severe masses of the 'Commedia.' The plan, however minute in detail, is comprehended at a glance. The harmonies of the design are as geometrical as some colossal church imagined by Bramante. But Dante had no intention of re-writing the 'Summa' in verse. He meant to be a poet, using the vulgar speech of 'that low Italy' in the production of an epic which should rank on equal terms with the *Æneid*, and be for modern Christendom what that had been for sacred Rome. Furthermore he had it in his heart to yield such honour to Virgil, 'leader, lord, and master,' as none had ever paid, and to write concerning Beatrice 'what had not before been written of any woman.' His poem was to be the storehouse of his personal experience. His love and hatred, his admiration of greatness and his scorn for cowardice, his resentment of injury, his gratitude for service rendered, his political creed and critical opinions, the joy he had of nature, and the pain he suffered when he walked with men: all this was to find expression at right seasons and in seemly order. Upon the severe framework of abstract truth, which forms the skeleton of the 'Commedia' and is the final end of its existence, Dante felt free to superimpose materials of inexhaustible variety. Following the metaphor of building more exactly, we may say that he employed these materials as the stones whereby he brought his architectural design to view. The abstract thought of the 'Commedia,' tyrannous and all-controlling as it is, could not lay claim to reality but for the dramatic episodes which present it to the intellect through the imagination.

Some such clothing of abstractions with concrete images was intended in the mediæval theory of allegory. The Church proscribed the poets of antiquity; and it had become an axiom that poetry was the art of lies.<sup>14</sup> Poetry was hardly suffered to exist except as a veil to cloak some hidden doctrine; and allegory presented a middle way of escape, whereby the pleasure of art could be enjoyed with a safe conscience. Virgil, whom the middle ages would not have relinquished, though a General Council had condemned him, received the absolution of allegorical interpretation. Dante, who defined poetry as the art 'which publishes the truth concealed beneath a veil of fable,' frequently interrupts the story to bid his readers note the meaning underneath the figures of his verse. In composing the 'Commedia,' he had moral edification and scientific truth for his end. The dramatic, narrative, descriptive, and lyrical beauties of his poem served to bring into relief or to shroud in appropriate mystery—since allegory both elucidates and

<sup>14</sup> See *Revival of Learning*, chap. ii.

obscures the matter it conveys—the doctrines he designed to inculcate. Still Dante stood, as a poet, at a height so far above his age and his own theories, that the cold and numbing touch of symbolism rarely mars the interest of his work. We may, perhaps, feel a certain confusion between the personalities of Virgil and Beatrice and the thoughts they represent, which chills our sympathy, raising a feeling of indignation when Virgil returns unwept to Hell, and removing Beatrice into a world of intangible ideas. We may find the pageant at the close of the 'Purgatory' unattractive; nor will the sublimity of the 'Paradiso' save the figures by which spiritual meanings are here suggested, from occasional grotesqueness. Thus much can be conceded. Dante, though born to be the poet of all time, was still a scion of his epoch. He could not altogether escape the influences of a misleading conception. But, apart from allegory, apart from didactic purpose, the 'Commedia' takes highest rank for the episodes, the action, the personal interest which never flags. No poet ever had a finer sense of reality, and none commanded the means of expressing it in all its forms more fully. Dante's own theory of symbolism offered an illimitable sphere for the exercise of his imagination, since it led him to give visible and palpable shape to the thoughts of his brain. And here it may be noted that the allegorical heresy proved less pernicious than another form of false opinion based upon an ideal of classical purity might have been. Since the poem was to present truth under a cloak of metaphor, it did not signify what figures were used. The purpose they served, justified them. Therefore Dante found himself at liberty to mingle satire with the hymns of angels; to seek illustrations from vulgar life no less than from nature in her sublimest moods; to delineate the horrible, the painful, the grotesque, and the improbable with the same sincerity as the beautiful, the charming, and the familiar. His dramatic faculty was exercised on themes so varied that to classify them is impossible—on the pathos of Francesca and the terror of Ugolino; the skirmish of the fiends in Malebolge and the meetings of Statius with Virgil; the pride of Farinata and the penitence of Manfred; the agonies of Adamo da Brescia and the calm delights of Piccarda dei Donati. He tells the stories of Ulysses and S. Francis, describes the flight of the Roman eagle and Cacciaguida's manhood, with equal energy of brief but ineffaceably impressive narration. This license inherent in the use of allegory justified his classing the fameless folk of his own days with the heroes of Biblical and classical antiquity, and permitted him to mingle ancient history with his censure of contemporary politics. All times, ages, countries, races of men are alike before the tribunal of God's justice. Accordingly, the poet who had taken man's moral nature for his theme, and was bound by his theory to present this theme symbolically, could bring to view a multitude of concrete persons, arranged (whatever else may issue from their converse with the protagonist) according to gradations of merit or demerit. Thus the 'Divine Comedy,' though written with a didactic object and under the influence of allegory, surpasses every other epic in the

distinctness of its motives and the realism of their presentation. The brief and pregnant style which scorns rhetorical adornment, the accurate picture-painting which aims at vivid delineation of the thing to be discerned, harmonise with its inflexible ethics, its uncompromising sincerity, its intense human feeling.

The 'Commedia' is too widely commensurate with its theme, the Human Soul, to be described or classified. The men of its era called it the 'Divine,' and this title it has preserved, in spite of the fierce censures of the Church which it contains. They called it 'La Divina' because of its material, doubtless, but also, we may dare to think, because of its unfathomable depth and height and breadth of thought. In course of time chairs were established at Florence, Padua, and in other cities, for its explanation; and the labour of the commentator was applied to it. That labour has been continued from Boccaccio's down to our own day; yet the dark places of the 'Commedia' have not been illuminated, nor is learning likely to solve some problems which perplex a careful student of its cantos. That matters, indeed, but little; for the main scope and purpose of the poem are plain, and its spirit is such that none who read can fail to recognise it.

Before Dante the Christian world had no poet, and Italy had no voice. The gift of Dante to Europe was an Epic on the one subject which united the modern nations in community of interest. The gift of Dante to his country was a masterpiece which placed her on a par with Homer's Hellas and with Virgil's Rome. If the first century of Italian literature could have produced three men of the calibre of Dante, Italy would have run her future course, as she began, abreast with ancient Greece. That was not, however, destined to be. The very conditions of the mission she had to fulfil in the fourteenth and two following centuries, rendered the emergence of a race of heroes impossible. Italy was about to recover the past. Her energies could not be concentrated on the evolution of herself in a new literature. To Dante succeeded Petrarch and Boccaccio.

Petrarch was born at Arezzo in the year 1304, when his father, like Dante, and in the same cause, had been expelled from Florence. His youth, passed partly in Tuscany and partly at Avignon, coincided with the years spent by Dante in the composition of the 'Commedia.' He was a student at Montpellier, neglecting his law-books for Cicero and Virgil, when Dante died at Ravenna in 1321. During those seventeen years of Dante's exile and Petrarch's boyhood, a change had passed over the political scene. The Papacy was transferred from Rome to France. The last attempts of the German Emperors to vindicate their authority below the Alps had failed. The Communes were yielding to anarchy and party feuds, or fast becoming the prey of despots. A new age had begun; and of this new age Petrarch was the representative, as Dante had been the poet of the ages which had passed away. Petrarch's inauguration of the classical Revival has been already described in this work; nor is it necessary to repeat the services he rendered to the cause

of humanism.<sup>15</sup> In a volume dealing with Italian literature the poet of the 'Canzoniere' must engage attention rather than the resuscitator of antique learning. It is Petrarch's peculiar glory to have held two equally illustrious places in the history of modern civilisation, as the final lyricist of chivalrous love and as the founder of the Renaissance. Yet this double attitude, when we compare him with Dante, constitutes the chief cause of his manifest inferiority.

The differences between Dante's and Petrarch's education were marked, and tended to accentuate the divergence of their intellectual and moral qualities. Dante, who lived until maturity within sight of his *bel San Giovanni*, grew up a Florentine in core and fibre. In his earliest work, the 'Vita Nuova,' there is a home-bred purity of style, as of something which could only have been perfected in Florence; a beauty akin to that of Giotto's tower; a perfume as of some flower peculiar to a district whence it will not bear transplanting. In his latest, the 'Paradiso,' he devotes one golden canto to the past prosperity of Florence, another to her decadence through the corruption of her citizens. While wandering like 'the world's rejected guest' away from that fair city of his birth, the unrest of his pilgrimage, contrasted with the peace of earlier manhood, only strengthened the Florentine within him. Though he traversed Italy in length and breadth, though the 'Commedia' furnishes an epitome of her landscapes and her local customs, describes her cities and resumes her history, the thought of national unity was not present to his mind. Italy remained for him the garden of the empire, the unruly colt whom Cæsar should bestride and curb. Elsewhere than in Florence Dante felt himself an alien. He refused the poet's crown unless it could be taken by the font of baptism upon the square of Florence. He chose banishment with honour and the stars of heaven, rather than ignominious entrance through the gates he loved so well; and yet from the highest sphere of Paradise he turned his eyes down to Florence and her erring folk:

Io, ched era al divino dall' umano,  
Ed all' eterno dal tempo venuto,  
E di Fiorenza in popol giusto e sano.

Petrarch, called to perform another mission, had a different training. Brought up from earliest infancy in exile, transferred from Tuscany to France, deprived of civic rights and disengaged from the duties of a burgher in those troublous times, he surveyed the world from his study and judged its affairs with the impartiality of a philosopher. Without a city, without a home, without a family, consecrated to the priesthood and absorbed in literary interests, he spent his life in musings at Vaucluse or in the splendid hospitalities of the Lombard Courts. Through all his wanderings he was a visitor, the citizen of no republic, but the freeman

<sup>15</sup> See *Revival of Learning*, chap. ii. I may also refer to an article by me in the *Quarterly Review* for October 1878, from which I shall have occasion to draw largely in the following pages.



of the City of the Spirit. Without exaggeration he might have chosen for his motto the phrase of Marcus Aurelius: 'I will not say dear city of Cecrops but dear city of God!' Avignon, where his intellect was formed in youth, had become through the residence of the Popes the capital of Christendom, the only centre of political and ecclesiastical activity where an ideal of universal culture could arise. Itself in exile, the Papacy still united the modern nations by a common bond; but its banishment from Rome was the sign of a new epoch, when the hegemony of civilisation should be transferred from the Church to secular control. In this way Petrarch was enabled to shape a conception of humanism which left the middle age behind; and when his mind dwelt on Italy at a distance, he could think of her as the great Italic land, inheritor of Rome, mother of a people destined to be one, born to rule, or if not rule, at least to regenerate the world through wisdom. From his lips we hear of Florence nothing; but for the first time the passionate cry of *Italia mia*, the appeal of an Italian who recognised his race, yet had no local habitation on the sacred soil, vibrates in his oratorical *canzoni*. Petrarch's dreams of a united Italy and a resuscitated Roman republic were hardly less visionary than Dante's ideal of universal monarchy with Rome for the seat of empire. Yet in his lyrics the true conception of Italy, one intellectually in spite of political discord and foreign oppression, the real and indestructible unity of the nation in a spirit destined to control the future of the human race, came suddenly to consciousness. There was an outcry in their passion-laden strophes which gathered volume as the years rolled over Italy, until at last, in her final prostration beneath Spanish Austria, they seemed less poems than authentic prophecies.

Thus while Dante remained a Florentine, Petrarch was the first Italian. Nor is it insignificant that whereas Dante refused the poet's crown unless he could place the laurels on his head in Florence, Petrarch ascended the Capitol among the plaudits of the Romans, and, in the absence of Pope and Emperor, received his wreath from the Senator Romanus. Dante's renunciation and Petrarch's acceptance of this honour were equally appropriate. Dante, as was fitting for a man of his era, looked still to the Commune. Petrarch's coronation on the Capitol was the outward sign that the age of the Communes was over, that culture was destined to be cosmopolitan, and that the Eternal City, symbolising the imperishable empire of the intellect, was now the proper throne of men marked out to sway the world by thoughts and written words.

In Petrarch the particular is superseded by the universal. The citizen is sunk in the man. The political prejudices of the partisan are conspicuous by absence. His language has lost all trace of dialect. He writes Italian, special to no district, though Tuscan in its source; and his verse fixes the standard of poetic diction for all time in Italy. These changes mark an important stage in literature emerging from its origins, and account for Petrarch's unequalled authority during the next three



centuries. Dante's Epic is classical because of its vivid humanity and indestructible material; but its spirit is mediæval and its details are strictly localised. Petrarch's outlook over the world and life is, in form at least, less confined to the limitations of his age. Consequently the students of a period passing rapidly beyond the mediæval cycle of ideas, found no bar between his nature and their sympathies.

In his treatment of chivalrous love we may notice this tendency to generalisation. The material transmitted from the troubadours, handled with affectation by the Sicilians, philosophised by the Florentines, loses transient and specific quality in the 'Canzoniere.' It takes rank at last among simply human emotions; and, though it has not lost a certain mediæval tincture, the 'Canzoniere' rather than the 'Vita Nuova,' the work of distinguished rather than of supreme genius, has on this account been understood and appropriated by all lovers in all ages and in every land. Petrarch's verses, to use Shelley's words, 'are as spells, which unseal the inmost enchanted fountains of the delight which is the grief of love.' And while we admit that 'Dante understood the secrets of love even more than Petrarch,' there is no doubt that the 'Canzoniere' strikes a note which vibrates more universally than the 'Vita Nuova.' The majority of men cannot but prefer the comprehensive to the intense expression of personal emotion.

Death rendered Beatrice's apotheosis conceivable; and Dante may be said to have rediscovered the Platonic mystery, whereby love is an initiation into the secrets of the spiritual world. It was the intuition of a sublime nature into the essence of pure impersonal enthusiasm. It was an exaltation of womanhood similar to that attempted less adequately by Shelley in 'Epipsychidion.' It was a real instinct like that which pervades the poetry of Michelangelo, and which sustains some men even in our prosaic age. Still there remained an ineradicable unsubstantiality in Dante's point of view, when tested by the common facts of feeling. His idealism was too far removed from ordinary experience to take firm hold upon the modern mind. In proportion as Beatrice personified abstractions, she ceased to be a woman even for her lover; nor was it possible, except by diminishing her individuality, to regard her as a symbol of the universal. She passed from the sphere of the human into the divine; and though her face was still beautiful, it was the face of Science rather than of one we love. There was even too little alloy of earth in Dante's passion for Beatrice.

Petrarch's love for Laura was of a different type. The unrest of earthly desire, for ever thwarted but recurring with imperious persistence, and the rebellion of the conscience against emotions which the lover recognised as lawless, broke his peace. It is true that, using the language of the earlier poets and obeying a sanguine mood of his own mind, he from time to time spoke of Laura as of one who led his soul to God. But his sincerest utterances reveal the discord of a heart divided between duty and inclination, the melancholy of a man who knows himself the prey of warring powers. His love for Laura seemed

an error and a sin, because it clashed with an ascetic impulse which had never been completely blunted. In his Hymn to the Virgin he referred to this passion as the Medusa that had turned his better self to stone:

Medusa e l' error mio m' han fatto un sasso  
D' umor van stillante.

There is a passage in the 'De Remediis utriusque Fortunæ,' where the lyricist of chivalrous love pours such contempt on women as his friend Boccaccio might have envied. In the 'Secretum,' again, he describes his own emotion as a torment from which he had vainly striven to emancipate himself by solitude, by journeys, by distractions, and by obstinate studies. In truth, he rarely alludes to the great passion of his life without a strange blending of tenderness and sore regret. Herein he proved himself not only a true child of his age, but also the precursor of the modern world. While he was still bound by the traditions of mediæval asceticism, a Christian no less devout and only less firm than Dante, his senses and his imagination, stirred possibly by contact with classic literature, rebelled against the mysticism of the Florentine School. This rebellion, but dimly apprehended by the poet himself, and complicated with the yearnings of a deeply religious nature after purity of thought and deed, gave its supreme strength and beauty to his verse. The 'Canzoniere' is not merely the poetry of love but the poetry of conflict also. The men of the Renaissance overleaped the conflict, and satisfied themselves with empty idealisations of sensual desire. But modern men have returned to Petrarch's point of view and found an echo of their own divided spirit in his poetry. He marks the transition from a mediæval to a modern mood, the passage from Cino and Guido to Werther and Rousseau.

That Laura was a real woman, and that Petrarch's worship of her was unfeigned; that he adored her with the senses and the heart as well as with the head; but that this love was at the same time more a mood of the imagination, a delicate disease, a cherished wound, to which he constantly recurred as the most sensitive and lively wellspring of poetic fancy, than a downright and impulsive passion, may be clearly seen in the whole series of his poems and his autobiographical confessions. Laura appears to have treated him with the courtesy of a somewhat distant acquaintance, who was aware of his homage and was flattered by it. But her lover enjoyed no privileges of intimacy, and it may be questioned whether, if Petrarch could by any accident have made her his own, the fruition of her love would not have been a serious interruption to the happiness of his life. He first saw her in the church of S. Claire, at Avignon, on April 6, 1327. She passed from this world on April 6, 1348. These two dates are the two turning-points of Petrarch's life. The interval of twenty-one years, when Laura trod the earth, and her lover in all his wanderings paid his orisons to her at morning, evening, and noonday, and passed his nights in dreams of

that fair form which never might be his, was the storm and stress period of his chequered career. There is an old Greek proverb that 'to desire the impossible is a malady of the soul.' With this malady in its most incurable form the poet was stricken; and, instead of seeking cure, he nursed his sickness and delighted in the discord of his spirit. From that discord he wrought the harmonies of his sonnets and *Canzoni*. That malady made him the poet of all men who have found in their emotions a dreamland more wonderful and pregnant with delight than in the world which we call real. After Laura's death his love was tranquillised to a sublimer music. The element of discord had passed out of it; and just because its object was now physically unattainable, it grew in purity and power. The sensual alloy which, however spiritualised, had never ceased to disturb his soul, was purged from his still vivid passion. Laura in heaven looked down upon him from her station mid the saints; and her poet could indulge the dream that now at last she pitied him, that she was waiting for him with angelic eyes of love, and telling him to lose no time, but set his feet upon the stairs that led to God and her. The romance finds its ultimate apotheosis in that transcendent passage of the 'Trionfo della Morte' which describes her death and his own vision. Throughout the whole course of this labyrinthine love-lament, sustained for forty years on those few notes so subtly modulated, from the first sonnet on his *primo giovanile errore* to the last line of her farewell, *tu starai in terra senza me gran tempo*, Laura grows in vividness before us. She only becomes a real woman in death, because she was for Petrarch always an ideal, and in the ideal world beyond the tomb he is more sure of her than when 'the fair veil' of flesh was drawn between her and his yearning.

Petrarch succeeded in bringing the old theme of chivalrous love back from the philosophising mysticism of the Florentines to simple experience. He forms a link between their transcendental science and the positive romance of the 'Decameron,' between the spirit of the middle ages and the spirit of the Renaissance. Guided by his master, Cino da Pistoja, the least metaphysical and clearest of his immediate predecessors, Petrarch found the right artistic *via media*; and perhaps we may attribute something to that double education which placed him between the influences of the Tuscan lyrists and the troubadours of his adopted country. At any rate he returned from the allegories of the Florentine poets to the directness of chivalrous emotion; but he treated the original motive with a greater richness and a more idealising delicacy than his Provençal predecessors. The marvellous instruments of the Italian Sonnet and Canzone were in his hands, and he knew how to draw from them a purer if not a grander melody than either Guido or Dante. The best work of the Florentines required a commentary; and the structure of their verse, like its content, was scientific rather than artistic. Petrarch could publish his 'Canzoniere' without explanatory notes. He laid his heart bare to the world, and every man who had a heart might understand his language. Between the subject-matter and

the verbal expression there lay no intervening veil of mystic meaning. The form had become correspondingly more clear and perfect, more harmonious in its proportions, more immediate in musical effects. In a word, Petrarch was the first to open a region where art might be free, and to find for the heart's language utterance direct and limpid.

This was his great achievement. The forms he used were not new. The subject-matter he handled was given to him. But he brought both form and subject closer to the truth, exercising at the same time an art which had hitherto been unconceived in subtlety, and which has never since been equalled. If Dante was the first great poet, Petrarch was the first true artist of Italian literature. It was, however, impossible that Petrarch should overleap at one bound all the barriers of the middle ages. His Laura has still something of the earlier ideality adhering to her. She stands midway between the Beatrice of Dante and the women of Boccaccio. She is not so much a woman with a character and personality, as woman in the general, *la femme*, personified and made the object of a poet's reveries. Though every detail of her physical perfections, with the single and striking exception of her nose, is carefully recorded, it is not easy to form a definite picture even of her face and shape. Of her inner nature we hear only the vaguest generalities. She sits like a lovely model in the midst of a beautiful landscape, like one of our Burne-Jones's women, who incarnate a mood of feeling while they lack the fulness of personality. The thought of her pervades the valley of Vaucluse; the perfume of her memory is in the air we breathe. But if we met her, we should find it hard to recognise her; and if she spoke, we should not understand that it was Laura.

Petrarch had no strong objective faculty. Just as he failed to bring Laura vividly before us, until she had by death become a part of his own spiritual substance, so he failed to depict things as he saw them. The pictures etched in three or four lines of the 'Purgatorio' may be sought for vainly in his 'Rime.' That his love of nature was intense, there is no doubt. The solitary of Vaucluse, the pilgrim of Mont Ventoux, had reached a point of sensibility to natural scenery far in advance of his age. But when he came to express this passion for beauty, he was satisfied with giving the most perfect form to the emotion stirred in his own subjectivity. Instead of scenes, he delineates the moods suggested by them. He makes the streams and cliffs and meadows of Vaucluse his confidants. He does not lose himself in contemplation of the natural object, though we feel that this self found its freest breathing-space, its most delightful company, in the society of hill and vale. He never cares to paint a landscape, but contents himself with such delicate touches and such cunning combinations of words as may suggest a charm in the external world. At this point the humanist, preoccupied with man as his main subject, meets the poet in Petrarch. What is lost, too, in the precision of delineation, is gained in universality. The 'Canzoniere' reminds us of no single spot; wherever there are clear fresh hills and hanging mountains, the lover walks with Petrarch by his side.

If the poet's dominant subjectivity weakened his grasp upon external things, it made him supreme in self-portraiture. Every mood of passion is caught and fixed precisely in his verse. The most evanescent shades of feeling are firmly set upon the exquisite picture. Each string of Love's many-chorded lyre is touched with a vigorous hand. The fluctuations of hope, despair, surprise; the 'yea and nay twinned in a single breath;' the struggle of conflicting aspirations in a heart drawn now to God and now to earth; the quiet resting-places of content; the recrudescence of the ancient smart; the peace of absence, when longing is luxury; the agony of presence, adding fire to fire—all this is rendered with a force so striking, in a style so monumental, that the 'Canzoniere' may still be called the Introduction to the Book of Love. Thus, when Petrarch's own self was the object, his hand was steady; his art failed not in modelling the image into roundness.

Dante brought the universe into his poem. But 'the soul of man, too, is a universe;' and of this inner microcosm Petrarch was the poet. It remained for Boccaccio, the third in the triumvirate, to treat of common life with art no less developed. From Beatrice through Laura to La Fiammetta; from the 'Divine Comedy' through the 'Canzoniere' to the 'Decameron;' from the world beyond the grave through the world of feeling to the world in which we play our puppet parts; from the mystic *terza rima*, through the stately lyric stanzas, to Protean prose—such was the rapid movement of Italian art within the brief space of some fifty years.

Giovanni Boccaccio was born in 1313, the eleventh year of Dante's exile, the first of Petrarch's residence at Avignon. His grandfather belonged originally to Certaldo; but he removed to Florence and received the rights of burghership among those countryfolk whom Dante reckoned the corrupters of her ancient commonwealth:<sup>16</sup>

Ma la cittadinanza, ch' è or mista  
Di Campi e di Certaldo e di Figghine,  
Pura vedeasi nell' ultimo artista.

Certaldo was a village of Valdelsa, famous for its onions. This explains the rebuff which the author of the 'Decameron' received from a Florentine lady, whom he afterwards satirised in the 'Corbaccio:' 'Go back to grub your onion-beds, and leave gentlewomen alone!' Boccaccio was neither born in wedlock nor yet of pure Italian blood. His mother was a Frenchwoman, with whom his father made acquaintance during a residence on business at Paris. These facts deserve to be noted, since they bear upon the temper of his mind and on the quality of his production.

It has been observed that the three main elements of Florentine society—the *popolo vecchio*, or nobles who acquiesced in the revolution of 1282; the *popolo grasso*, or burghers occupying a middle rank in the city, who passed the Ordinances of 1293; and the *popolo minuto*, or

<sup>16</sup> *Par.* xvi.

artisans and *contadini* admitted to the franchise, who came to the front between 1343 and 1378—are severally represented by Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio.<sup>17</sup> So rapid are the political and intellectual mutations in a little State like Florence, where the vigour of popular life and the vivacity of genius bear no proportion to the size of the community, that within the short span of fifty years the centre of power may be transferred from an aristocracy to the proletariat, and the transition in art and literature from the middle age to the Renaissance may not only be accomplished but copiously illustrated in detail.<sup>18</sup>

Boccaccio was the typical Italian *bourgeois*, the representative of a class who finally determined the Renaissance. His prose and poetry contain in germ the various species which were perfected during that period. Studying him, we study in its immaturity the spirit of the next two centuries. He was the first to substitute a literature of the people for the literature of the learned classes and the aristocracy. He freed the natural instincts from ascetic interdictions and the mysticism of the transcendental school. He exposed the shams of chivalrous romance and the hypocrisies of monkery with ridicule more deadly than satire or invective. He brought realism in art and letters back to honour by delineating the world as he found it—sensual, base, comic, ludicrous, pathetic, tender, cruel—in all its crudities and contradictions. He replaced the abstractions of the allegory by concrete fact. He vindicated the claims of appetite and sensuous enjoyment against ideal aspirations and the scruples of a faith-tormented conscience. He taught his fellow-countrymen that a life of studious indifference was preferable to the strife of factions and the din of battle-fields.

Boccaccio did not act consciously and with fixed purpose to these ends. He was rather the spokesman of his age and race—the sign in literature that Italian society had entered upon a new phase, and that the old order was passing away. If the ‘Decameron’ seemed to shake the basis of morality; if it gained the name of ‘Il Principe Galeotto’ or the Pandar; if it was denounced as the corrupter of the multitude; this meant, not that its author had a sinister intention, but that the mediæval fabric was already sapped, and that the people whom Boccaccio wrote to please were disillusioned of their previous ideals. The honest easy-going man, Giovanni della Tranquillità, as he was called, painted what he saw and made himself the mouthpiece of the men around him.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Carducci, ‘Dello Svolgimento della Letteratura Nazionale.’ *Studi Letterari* (Livorno, 1874), p. 60.

<sup>18</sup> The *Divine Comedy* was probably begun in earnest about 1303, and the *Decameron* was published in 1353.

<sup>19</sup> Boccaccio was called Giovanni della Tranquillità partly in scorn. He resented it, as appears from a letter to Zanobi della Strada (*Op. Volg.* vol. xvii. p. 101), because it implied a love of Court delights and parasitical idleness. In that letter he amply defends himself from such imputations, showing that he led the life of a poor and contented student. Yet the nickname was true in a deeper sense, as is proved by the very arguments of his apology, and confirmed by the description of his life at Certaldo remote from civic duties (Letter to Pino de’ Rossi, *ibid.* p. 35), as well as by the tragic-comic narrative of his discomfort at Naples (Letter to Messer Francesco,



For the work he had to do, he was admirably fitted by nature and education. He combined the blood of a Florentine tradesman and a Parisian *grisette*. He had but little learning in his youth, and was the first great Italian writer who had not studied at Bologna. His early manhood was passed in commerce at Naples, where he gained access to the dissolute Court of Joan, and made love to her ladies. At his father's request he applied himself for a short while to legal studies; but he does not appear to have practised as a lawyer in real earnest. Literature very early became the passion, the one serious and ennobling enthusiasm of his life. We have already seen him at the tomb of Virgil, vowing to devote his powers to the sacred Muses; and we know what services he rendered to humanism by his indefatigable energy in the acquisition and diffusion of miscellaneous learning.<sup>20</sup> This is not the place to treat of Boccaccio's scholarship. Yet it may be said that, just as his philosophy of life was the philosophy of a jovial and sensuous plebeian, so his conception of literature lacked depth and greatness. He repeated current theories about the dependence of poetry on truth, the dignity of allegory, the sacredness of love, the beauty of honour. But his own work showed how little he had appropriated these ideas. As a student, a poet, and a man, he lived upon a lower plane of thought than Petrarch; and when he left the concrete for the abstract, his penetrative insight failed him.

From this point of view Boccaccio's *Life of Dante* is instructive. It is crammed with heterogeneous erudition. It bristles with citations and opinions learned by rote. It reveals the heartiest reverence for all things reckoned worthy in the realm of intellect. The admiration for the divine poet expressed in it is sincere and ungrudging. Yet this book betrays an astonishing want of sympathy with Dante, and transforms the sublime romance of the 'Vita Nuova' into a commonplace *novella*. Dante told the world how he first felt love for Beatrice at the age of nine. His biographer is at a loss to understand this miracle. He supposes that the sweet season of May, the good wines and delicate dishes of the Portinari banquet, all the sensuous delights of a Florentine festival, combined to make the boy prematurely a man.<sup>21</sup> Dante called Beatrice 'youngest of the angels.' Boccaccio draws a lively picture of an angel in the flesh, as he imagined her; and in his portrait there is far less of the angelic than the carnal nature visible. This he does in perfect good faith, with the heartfelt desire to exalt Dante above all poets, and to spread abroad the truth of his illustrious life. But the hero of Renaissance literature was incapable of comprehending the real feeling of the man he worshipped. Between him and the enthusiasms of the middle ages a nine-fold Styx already poured its waves.

*ibid.* pp. 37-87). Not only in these passages, but in all his works, he paints himself a comfort-loving *bourgeois*, whose heart was set on his books, whose ideal of enjoyment was a satisfied passion of a sensual kind.

<sup>20</sup> See *Revival of Learning*, chap. ii. pp. 369-374.

<sup>21</sup> Boccaccio, *Opere Volgari* (Firenze, 1833), vol. xv. p. 18.



Boccaccio's noblest quality was the recognition of intellectual power. It was this cult of great men, if we may trust Filippo Villani, which first decided him to follow literature.<sup>22</sup> His devotion to the memory of Dante, and his frank confession of inferiority to Petrarch, whom he loved and served through twenty years of that exacting poet's life, are equally sincere and beautiful. These feelings inspired some of his finest poems, and penetrated the autobiographical passages of his minor works with a delicacy that endears the man to us.<sup>23</sup> No less candid was his worship of beauty—not beauty of an intellectual or ideal order, but sensuous and real—the beauty which inspired the artists and the poets of the following centuries. Nor has any writer of any age been gifted with a stronger faculty for its expression. From this service of the beautiful he derived the major impulse of his activity as an artist. If he lacked moral greatness, if he was deficient in philosophical depth and religious earnestness, his devotion to art was serious, intense, profound, absorbing. He discharged his duties as a citizen with easy acquiescence, but no stern consciousness of patriotic purpose. He conformed to the Church, and allowed himself in old age to be frightened into a kind of half-repentance. But the homage he rendered to art was of a very different and more exacting nature. With his best energies he laboured to make himself, at least in this sphere, perfect. How amply he succeeded must be acknowledged by all men who have read the 'Decameron,' and who have seen that here Boccaccio forms the legends of all ages and all lands into one harmonious whole, brings a world of many-sided human interest and varied beauty out of the chaos of mediæval materials, finishing every detail with love, inspiring each particle with life, and setting the dædal picture of society in a framework of delicate romance. The conception and the execution of this masterpiece of literature are equally artistic. If the phrase 'art for art' can be used in speaking of one who was unconscious of the theory it implies, Boccaccio may be selected as the typical artist for art's sake. Within the sphere of his craft, he is impassioned, enthusiastic, sincere, profound. His attitude with regard to all else is one of amused or curious indifference, of sensuous enjoyment, of genial ridicule, of playful cynicism.

Boccaccio was a *bourgeois* of the fourteenth century; but his character, as stamped on the 'Decameron,' was common to Italy during the next two hundred years. The whole book glows with the joyousness of a race discarding dreams for realities, scorning the terrors of a bygone creed, revelling in nature's liberty, proclaiming the empire of the senses with a frankness which passes over into license. In Boccaccio, the guiding genius of the Italian Renaissance arrives at consciousness. That blending of moral indifference with artistic seriousness, which we observe

<sup>22</sup> *Revival of Learning*, p. 370.

<sup>23</sup> I may specially refer to the passages of the *Amorosa Visione* (cap. v. vi.) where he meets with Dante, 'gloria delle muse mentre visse,' 'il maestro dal qual' io tengo ogni ben,' 'il Signor d' ogni sapere,' also to the sonnets on Dante, and that most beautiful sonnet addressed to Petrarch after death at peace in heaven with Cino and Dante. See the *Rime* (*Op. Volg.* vol. xvi.), sonnets 8, 60, 97, 108.

in him, marks the coming age. He is not the precursor but the inaugurator of the era. The smile which plays around his mouth became, though changeable in expression, fixed upon the lips of his posterity—genial in Ariosto, gracious in Poliziano, mischievous in Pulci, dubious in Lorenzo de' Medici, sardonic in Aretino, bitter in Folengo, toned to tragic irony in Machiavelli, impudent in Berni, joyous in Boiardo, sensual in Bandello—assuming every shade of character, Protean, indescribable, until at last it fades from Tasso's brow, when Italy has ceased to laugh except in secret.

The 'Decameron' has been called the 'Commedia Umana.'<sup>24</sup> This title is appropriate, not merely because the book portrays human life from a comic rather than a serious point of view, but also because it is the direct antithesis of Dante's 'Commedia Divina.' As poet and scene-painter devised for our ancestors of the Elizabethan period both Masque and Anti-masque, so did the genius of Italy provide two shows for modern Europe—the Masque and Anti-masque of human nature. Dante's Comedy represents our life in relation to the life beyond the grave. Boccaccio in his Comedy depicts the life of this earth only, subtracting whatsoever may suggest a life to come. It would be difficult to determine which of the two dramas is the more truthful, or which of the two poets had a firmer grasp upon reality. But the realities of the Divine Comedy are spiritual; those of the Human Comedy are material. The world of the 'Decameron' is not an inverted world, like that of Aristophanes. It does not antithesise Dante's world by turning it upside down. It is simply the same world surveyed from an opposite point of view—unaltered, uninverted, but seen in the superficies, presented in the concrete. It is the prose of life; and this justifies the counterpoise of its form to that of Dante's poem. It is the world as world, the flesh as flesh, nature as nature, without intervention of spiritual agencies, without relation to ideal order, regarded as the sphere of humour, fortune, marvellous caprice. It is everything which the Church had banned, proscribed, held in abhorrence, without that which the Church had inculcated for the exaltation of the soul. This world, actual and unexplained, Boccaccio paints with the mastery of an accomplished artist, moulding its chaotic elements into a form of beauty which compels attention.

Dante condemned those 'who submit their reason to natural appetite.'<sup>25</sup> Boccaccio celebrates the apotheosis of natural appetite, of *il talento*, stigmatised as sin by ascetic Christianity.<sup>26</sup> His strongest sym-

<sup>24</sup> De Sanctis, *Storia della Letteratura Italiana*, vol. i. cap. 9.

<sup>25</sup> 'Che la ragion sommettono al talento.' *Inferno* v. Compare these phrases:

'Le genti dolorose

Che hanno perduto il ben dell' intelletto.'—*Inferno* iii.

And Semiramis:

'Che libito fe lecito in sua legge.'—*Inferno* v.

<sup>26</sup> In all his earlier works, especially in the *Fiammetta*, the *Filostrato*, the *Ninfale Fiesolano*, the *Amorosa Visione*, he sings the hymn of *Il Talento*, triumphant over mediæval discipline. They form the proper prelude to what is sometimes called the

pathies are reserved for those who suffer by abandoning themselves to impulse, and in this self-abandonment he sees the poetry of life. This is the very core of the antithesis presented by the Human to the Divine Comedy. The 'Decameron' is an undesigned revolt against the sum of mediæval doctrine. Like all vehement reactions, it is not satisfied with opposing the extravagances of the view it combats. Instead of negating asceticism, it affirms license. Yet though the 'Divine Comedy' and the 'Decameron' are antithetical, they are both true, and true together, inasmuch as they present the same humanity studied under contradictory conditions. Human nature is vast enough to furnish the materials for both, inexplicable enough to render both acceptable to reason, tolerant enough to view with impartial approbation the desolate theology of the 'Inferno' and the broad mirth of the 'Decameron.'<sup>27</sup>

The 'Decameron' did not appear unheralded by similar attempts. No literary taste was stronger in the middle ages than the taste for stories. This is proved by the collection known as 'Gesta Romanorum,' and by the 'Bestiarii,' 'Lapidarii,' 'Physiologi' and 'Apiarii,' which contain a variety of tales, many of them surprisingly indecent, veiling spiritual doctrine under obscenities which horrify a modern reader.<sup>28</sup> From the hands of ecclesiastical compilers these short stories passed down to popular narrators, who in France made the *fabliaux* a special branch of vulgar literature. The follies and vices of the clergy, tricks practised by wives upon their husbands, romantic adventures of lovers, and comic incidents of daily life, formed the staple of their stock in trade. When the *fabliau* reached Italy, together with other literary wares, from France, it was largely cultivated in the South; and the first known collection of Italian stories received the name of 'Il Novellino,' or 'Il Fiore del parlar gentile.' The language of this book was immature, and the tales themselves seem rather memoranda for the narrator than finished compositions to be read with pleasure.<sup>29</sup> It may

Paganism of the Renaissance, but what is really a resurgence of the natural man. It was this *talento* which Valla philosophised, and Beccadelli and Pontano sang.

<sup>27</sup> One instance will suffice to illustrate the different methods of Boccaccio and Dante in dealing with the same material. We all know in what murk and filth Dante beheld Ciaccio, the glutton, and what torments awaited Filippo Argenti, the *fiorentino spirito bizzarro*, upon the marsh of Styx (*Inferno* vi. and viii.). These persons play the chief parts in Giorn. ix. Nov. 8 of the *Decameron*. They are still the spendthrift parasite, and the brutally capricious bully. But while Dante points the sternest moral by their examples, Boccaccio makes their vices serve his end of comic humour. The inexorableness of Dante is nowhere more dreadful than in the eighth Canto of the *Inferno*. The levity of Boccaccio is nowhere more superficial than in that Novella.

<sup>28</sup> See the little work, full of critical learning, by Adolfo Bartoli, *I Precursori del Boccaccio*, Firenze, Sansoni.

<sup>29</sup> See *Le Novelle Antiche* (another name for *Il Novellino*), per cura di Guido Biagi, Firenze, Sansoni, 1880. It is a curious agglomeration of anecdotes drawn from the history of the Suabian princes, Roman sources, the Arthurian legends, the Bible, Oriental apologues, fables, and a few ancient myths. That of *Narcis*, p. 66, is very prettily told. Only one tale is decidedly cynical. We find in the book selections made from the *débris* of a vast and various mediæval library. French influence is frequently perceptible in the style.

therefore be admitted that the rude form of the 'Decameron' was given to Boccaccio. Not to mention the larger chivalrous romances, 'Conti di antichi Cavalieri,' and translations from French Chansons de Geste, which have no genuine link of connexion with the special type of the *Nóvella*, he found models for his tales both in the libraries of mediæval convents and upon the lips of popular *raccontatori*. Yet this must not be taken to imply any lack of originality in Boccaccio. Such comparisons as Professor Bartoli has instituted between the 'Decameron' and some of its supposed sources, prove the insignificance of his debt, the immeasurable inferiority of his predecessors.<sup>30</sup>

The spirit of the 'Decameron,' no less than the form, had been long in preparation. Satire, whether superficial, as in the lays of the *jongleurs*, or searching, as in the invectives of Dante and Petrarch, was familiar to the middle ages; and the popular Latin poems of the wandering students are steeped in rage against a corrupt hierarchy, a venal Curia.<sup>31</sup> Those same 'Carmina Vagorum' reveal the smouldering embers of unextinguished Paganism, which underlay the Christian culture of the middle ages. Written by men who belonged to the clerical classes, but who were often on bad terms with ecclesiastical authorities, tinctured with the haughty contempt of learning for the laity, yet overflowing with the vigorous life of the proletariat, these extraordinary poems bring to view a bold and candid sensuality, an ineradicable spontaneity of natural appetite, which is strangely at variance with the cardinal conceptions of ascetic Christianity.<sup>32</sup> In the sect of the Italian Epi-

<sup>30</sup> *Precursori del Boccaccio*, p. 57 to end.

<sup>31</sup> See *Carmina Burana* (Stuttgart, 1847), pp. 1-112; *Poems of Walter Mapes*, by Thomas Wright (for Camden Society, 1841), pp. 1-257, for examples of these satiric poems. The *Propter Syon non tacebo*, *Flete Sion filia*, *Utar contra vitia*, should be specially noticed. Many other curious satires, notably one against marriage and the female sex, can also be found in Du Ménil's three great collections, *Poésies Populaires Latines antérieures au douzième Siècle*, *Poésies Populaires Latines du Moyen Age*, and *Poésies Inédites du Moyen Age*, Paris, 1843-1847. Those to whom these works are not accessible, may find an excellent selection of the serious and jocular popular Latin mediæval poetry in a little volume, *Gaudeamus! Carmina Vagorum selecta*, Lipsiæ, Teubner, 1877. The question of their authorship has been fairly well discussed by Hubatsch, *Die lateinischen Vagantenlieder*, Görlitz, 1870.

<sup>32</sup> The erotic and drinking songs of the Vagi deserve to be carefully studied by all who wish to understand the germs of the Renaissance in the middle ages. They express a simple naturalism, not of necessity Pagan, though much is borrowed from the language of classical mythology. I would call attention in particular to *Æstivans interius*, *Omittamus studia*, *O admirabile Veneris idolum*, *Ludo cum Cæcilio*, *Si puer cum puellula*, and four *Pastoralia*, all of which may be found in the little book *Gaudeamus* cited above. In spontaneity and truth of feeling they correspond to the Latin hymns. But their spirit is the exact antithesis of that which produced the *Dies Ira* and the *Stabat Mater*. The absence of erudition and classical imitation separates them from the poems of Beccadelli, Pontano, Poliziano, or Bembo. They present the natural material of neo-pagan Latin verse without its imitative form. It is youth rejoicing in its strength and lustihood, enjoying the delights of spring, laughing at death, taking the pleasures of the moment, deriding the *rumores senum severiorum*, unmasking hypocrisy in high places, at wanton war with constituted social shams. These songs were written by wandering students of all nations, who traversed Germany, France, Italy, Spain, England, seeking special knowledge at the great centres

cureans; in the obscure bands of the Cathari and Paterini; in the joyous companies of Provençal court and castle, the same note of irrepressible nature sounded. Side by side with the new-built fabric of ecclesiastical idealism, the old temples of unregenerate human deities subsisted. They were indeed discredited, proscribed, consigned to shame. They formed the *mauvais lieux* of Christendom. Yet there they stood, even as the Venusberg of Tannhäuser's legend abode unshaken though cathedrals rose by the Rhine. All that was needed to restore the worship of these nature-gods was that a great artist should decorate their still substantial temple-walls with the beauty of a new, sincere, and unrepentant style, fitting their abandoned chambers for the habitation of the human spirit, free now to choose the dwelling that it listed. This Boccaccio achieved. And here it must again be noticed that the revolution of time was about to bring man's popular and carnal deities once more, if only for a season, to the throne. The murmured songs of a few wandering students were about to be drowned in the pæan of Renaissance poetry. The visions of the Venusberg were to be realised in Italian painting. The coming age was destined to live out Boccaccio's Human Comedy in act and deed. This is the true kernel of his greatness. As poet, he ranked third only, and that at a vast interval, in the triumvirate of the fourteenth century. But the temper of his mind, the sphere of his conceptions, made him the representative genius of the two following centuries. Awaiting the age when science should once more co-ordinate the forces of humanity in a coherent theory, men in the Renaissance exchanged superfluous restraint for immoderate license. It is not to be wondered at that Boccaccio and not Dante was their hero.

The description of the Plague at Florence which introduces the 'Decameron,' has more than a merely artistic appropriateness. Boccaccio may indeed have meant to bring his group of pleasure-seeking men and maidens into strong relief by contrast with the horrors of the stricken city. Florence crowded with corpses, echoing to the shrieks of delirium and the hoarse cries of body-buriers, is the background he has chosen for that blooming garden, where the birds sing and the lovers sit by fountains in the shade, laughing or weeping as the spirit of each tale compels them. But independently of this effect of contrast, which might be used to illustrate the author's life-philosophy, the description of the Plague has a still deeper significance, whereof Boccaccio never dreamed. Matteo Villani dates a progressive deterioration of manners in the city from the Plague of 1348, and justifies us in connecting the Ciompi riots of 1378 with the enfeeblement of civic order during those thirty years. The Plague was, therefore, the outward sign, if not the efficient cause, of those very ethical and social changes which the 'De-

of learning, following love-adventures, poor and careless, coldly greeted by the feudal nobility and the clergy, attached to the people by their habits, but separated from them by their science. In point of faith these poets are orthodox. There is no questioning of ecclesiastical dogma, no anticipation of Luther, in their verses. This blending of theological conformity with satire on the Church and moral laxity is eminently characteristic of the Renaissance in Italy.

cameron' immortalised in literature. It was the historical landmark between two ages, dividing the Florence of the Grandi from the Florence of the Ciompi. The cynicism, liberated in that time of terror, lawlessness, and sudden death, assumed in Boccaccio's romance a beautiful and graceful aspect. It lost its harsh and vulgar outlines, and took the air of genial indulgence which distinguished Italian society throughout the years of the Renaissance.

Boccaccio selects seven ladies of ages varying from eighteen to twenty-eight, and three men, the youngest of whom is twenty-five. Having formed this company, he transports them to a villa two miles from the city, where he provides them with a train of serving-men and waiting-women, and surrounds them with the delicacies of mediæval luxury. He is careful to remind us that, though the three men and three of the ladies were acknowledged lovers, and though their conversation turned on almost nothing else but passion, 'no stain defiled the honour of the party.' Stories are told; and these unblemished maidens listen with laughter and a passing blush to words and things which outrage a Northern sense of decency. The remorseless but light satire of the 'Decameron' spares none of the ideals of the age. All the mediæval enthusiasms are reviewed and criticised from the standpoint of the Florentine *bottega* and *piazza*. It is as though the *bourgeois*, not content with having made nobility a crime, were bent upon extinguishing its spirit. The tale of Agilulf vulgarises the chivalrous conception of love ennobling men of low estate, by showing how a groom, whose heart is set upon a queen, avails himself of opportunity. Tancredi burlesques the knightly reverence for a stainless scutcheon by the extravagance of his revenge. The sanctity of the Thebaid, that ascetic dream of purity and self-renunciation for God's service, is made ridiculous by Alibech. Ser Ciappelletto brings contempt upon the canonisation of saints. The confessional, the worship of reliques, the priesthood, and the monastic orders, are derided with the deadliest persiflage. Christ himself is scoffed at in a jest which points the most indecent of these tales.<sup>33</sup> Marriage affords a never-failing theme for scorn; and when, by way of contrast, the novelist paints an ideal wife, he runs into such hyperboles that the very patience of Griselda is a satire on its dignity. Like Balzac, Boccaccio was unsuccessful in depicting virtuous womanhood. Attempting this, he fell, like Balzac, into the absurdities of sentiment. His own conception of love was sensual and voluptuous—not uniformly coarse, nay often tender, but frankly carnal. Without having recourse to the 'Decameron,' this statement might be abundantly substantiated by reference to the 'Filostrato,' 'Fiammetta,' 'Amorosa Visione,' 'Ninfale Fiesolano.' Boccaccio enjoyed the painting of licentious pleasures, snatched in secret, sometimes half by force, by a lover after moderate resistance from his paramour. He imported into these pictures the plebeian tone which we have already noticed in the popular poetry of the preceding century, and which was destined to pervade the erotic

<sup>33</sup> See the last sentence of Giorn. iii. Nov. 1.



literature of the Renaissance. There is, therefore, an ironical contrast between the decencies observed by his *brigata* and their conversation; a contrast rooted in the survival from chivalrous times of conventional ideals, which have lost reality and been persistently ignored in practice. This effect of irony is enhanced by the fact that many of the motives are such as might have been romantically treated, but here are handled from the *popolano grasso's* point of view. A sceptical and sensuous imagination plays around the sanctities and sublimities which have for it become illusory.

We observe the same kind of unconscious hypocrisy, the same spontaneous sapping of now obsolete ideals, in the 'Amorosa Visione'.<sup>34</sup> Here Love is still regarded as the apotheosis of mortal experience. It is still said to be the union of intelligence and moral energy in an enthusiasm of the soul. Yet the joys of love revealed at the conclusion of the poem are such as a *bayadère* might offer.<sup>35</sup> The *bourgeois* effaces the knight; the Italian of the Renaissance has broken the leading strings of mystical romance. This vision, composed in *terza rima*, was assuredly not meant to travesty Dante. Still it would be difficult to imagine a more complete inversion of the Dantesque point of view, a more deliberate substitution of an Earthly Paradise for the Paradiso of the 'Divine Comedy.' It is as though Boccaccio, the representative of the new age, in all the fulness of his sensuous *naïveté*, appealed to the poets of chivalry, and said: 'See here how all your fancies find their end in nature!'

It will not do to overstrain the censure implied in the foregoing paragraphs. Natural appetite, no less than the ideal, has its elements of poetry; and the sensuality of the 'Decameron' accords with plastic beauty in a work of art incomparably lucid. Shelley, no lenient critic, wrote these words about the setting of the tales:<sup>36</sup> 'What descriptions of nature are those in his little introductions to every new day! It is the morning of life stripped of that mist of familiarity which makes it obscure to us.' Boccaccio's sense of beauty has already been alluded to; and it so pervades his work that special attention need scarcely be called to it. His prose abounds in passages which are perfect pictures after their own kind, like the following selected, not from the 'Decameron,' but from an earlier work entitled 'Filocolo':<sup>37</sup>

<sup>34</sup> *Op. Volg.* vol. xiv.

<sup>35</sup> *Cap.* xlix.

<sup>36</sup> Letter to Leigh Hunt, September 8, 1819.

<sup>37</sup> *Op. Volg.* vol. vii. p. 230. I am loth to attempt a translation of this passage, which owes its charm to the melody and rhythm of chosen words:—

'With ears intent upon the music, he began to go in the direction whence he heard it; and when he drew nigh to the fountain, he beheld the two maidens. They were of countenance exceeding white, and this whiteness was blent in seemly wise with ruddy hues. Their eyes seemed to be stars of morning, and their little mouths, of the colour of a vermeil rose, became of pleasanter aspect as they moved them to the music of their song. Their tresses, like threads of gold, were very fair, and slightly curled went wandering through the green leaves of their garlands. By reason of the great heat their tender and delicate limbs, as hath been said above, were clad in



Con gli orecchi intenti al suono, cominciò ad andare in quella parte ove il sentiva; e giunto presso alla fontana, vide le due giovinette. Elle erano nel viso bianchissime, la quale bianchezza quanto si conveniva di rosso colore era mescolata. I loro occhi pareano mattutine stelle, e le piccole bocche di colore di vermiglia rosa, più piacevoli diveniano nel muoverle alle note della loro canzone. I loro capelli come fila d'oro erano biondissimi, i quali alquanto crespi s'avvolgevano infra le verdi frondi delle loro ghirlande. Vestite per lo gran caldo, come è detto sopra, le tenere e delicate carni di sottilissimi vestimenti, i quali dalla cintura in su strettissimi mostravano la forma delle belle mamme, le quali come due ritondi pomi pigneivano in fuori il esistente vestimento e ancora in più luoghi per leggiadre aperture si manifestavano le candide carni. La loro statura era di convenevole grandezza, in ciascun membro bene proporzionata.

Space and nineteenth-century canons of propriety prevent me from completing the picture made by Florio and these maidens. It might be paralleled with a hundred passages of like intention, where the Italian artist is revealed to us by touches curiously multiplied.<sup>38</sup> We find in them the sense of colour, the scrupulous precision of form, and something of that superfluous minuteness which belongs to painting rather than to literature. The writer has seen a picture, and not felt a poem. In rendering it by words, he trusted to the imagination of his reader for suggesting a highly finished work of plastic art to the mind.<sup>39</sup> The *fêtes champêtres* of the Venetian masters are here anticipated in the prose of the *Treccanto*. Such descriptions were frequent in Italian literature, especially frequent in the works of the best stylists, Sannazzaro, Poliziano, Ariosto, the last of whom has been severely but not unjustly criticised by Lessing for overstepping the limits of poetry in his portrait of Alcina. It may be pleaded in defence of Boccaccio and his followers that they belonged to a nation dedicated to the figurative arts, and that they wrote for a public familiar with painted form. Their detailed descriptions were at once translated into colour by men habituated to the sight of pictures. During the Renaissance, painting dominated the Italian genius, and all the sister arts of expression felt that influence, just as at Athens sculpture lent something even to the drama.

As a poet, Boccaccio tried many styles. His epic, the 'Teseide,' cannot be reckoned a great success. He was not at home upon the battlefield, and knew not how to sound the heroic trumpet.<sup>40</sup> Yet the credit

robes of the thinnest texture, the which, made very tight above the waist, revealed the form of their fair bosoms, which like two round apples pushed the opposing raiment outward, and therewith in divers places the white flesh appeared through graceful openings. Their stature was of fitting size, and each limb well-proportioned.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>38</sup> The description of the nymph Lia in the *Ameto* (*Op. Volg.* xv. 30-33) carries Boccaccio's manner into tedious prolixity.

<sup>39</sup> Boccaccio was a great painter of female beauty and idyllic landscape; but he had not the pictorial faculty in a wider sense. The frescoes of the *Amorosa Visione*, when compared with Poliziano's descriptions in *La Giostra*, are but meagre notes of form. Possibly the progress of the arts from Giotto to Benozzo Gozzoli and Botticelli may explain this picturesque inferiority of the elder poet; but in reading Boccaccio we feel that the defect lay not so much in his artistic faculty as in the limitation of his sympathy to certain kinds of beauty.

<sup>40</sup> Dante (*De Vulg. Elog.* ii. 2) observed that while there were three subjects of

of discovery may be awarded to the author of this poem. He introduced to the modern world a tale rich in romantic incidents and capable of still higher treatment than he was himself able to give it. When we remember how Chaucer, Shakspeare, Fletcher and Dryden handled and rehandled the episode of Palamon's rivalry with Arcite for the hand of Emilia, we dare not withhold from Boccaccio the praise which belongs to creative genius.<sup>41</sup> It is no slight achievement to have made a story which bore such noble fruit in literature. The 'Teseide,' moreover, fulfilled an important mission in Italian poetry. It adapted the popular *ottava rima* to the style of the romantic epic, and fixed it for Pulci, Poliziano, Boiardo, and Ariosto. That Boccaccio was not the inventor of the stanza, as used to be assumed, may now be considered beyond all question. That he had not learned to handle it with the majestic sweetness of Poliziano, or the infinite variety of Ariosto, is evident. Yet he deserves credit for having discerned its capacity and brought it into cultivated use.

Though unequal in quality, his sonnets and *ballate*, whether separately published or scattered through his numerous prose works, have a higher merit. The best are those in which, following Guido Cavalcanti's path, he gives free scope to his incomparable sense of natural beauty. The style is steeped in sweetness, softness and the delicacy of music. From these half-popular poems I might select the Ballata 'Io mi son giovinetta,' the song of the Angel from the planet Venus, extracted from the 'Filocopo,' a lament of a woman for her lost youth, 'Il fior che 'l valor perde,' and the girl's prayer to Love, 'Tu se' nostro Signor caro e verace.'<sup>42</sup> It is difficult for the critic to characterise poems so true to simple nature, so spontaneously passionate, and yet so artful in the turns of language, moulded like wax beneath the poet's touch. Here sensuousness has no vulgarity, and the seductions of the flesh are sublimed by feeling to a

great poetry—War, Love, Morality—no modern had chosen the first of these themes. Boccaccio in the last Canto of the *Teseide* seems to allude to this:

Poichè le muse nude cominciare  
 Nel cospetto degli uomini ad andare,  
 Già fur di quelli che le esercitaro  
 Con bello stile *in onesto parlare*,  
 Ed altri in *amoroso* le operarò:  
 Ma tu, o libro, primo a lor cantare  
 Di *Marte* fai gli affanni sostenuti,  
*Nel volgar Lazio mai più non veduti.*

<sup>41</sup> How far Boccaccio actually created the tale can be questioned. In the dedication to Fiammetta (*Op. Volg.* ix. 3), he says he found a very ancient version of his story, and translated it into rhyme and the *latino volgare* for the first time. Again, in the exordium to the first Book (*ib.* p. 10), he calls it:

una storia antica  
 Tanto negli anni riposta e nascosa  
 Che latino autor non par ne dica  
 Per quel ch' i' senta in libro alcuna cosa.

We might perhaps conjecture that he had discovered the legend in a Byzantine MS.

<sup>42</sup> Carducci, 'Cantilene, &c.,' *op. cit.* pp. 168, 170, 171, 173.

beauty which is spiritual in refinement. It may be observed that Boccaccio writes his best love-poetry to be sung by girls. He has abandoned the standpoint of the chivalrous lover, though he still uses the phraseology of the Italo-Provençal school. What arrests his fancy is, not the ideal of womanhood raising man above himself, but woman conscious of her own supreme attractiveness. He delights in making her the mirror of the feelings she inspires. He bids her celebrate in hymns the beauty of her sex, the perfume of the charms that master man. When the metaphysical forms of speech, borrowed from the elder style, are used, they give utterance to a passion which is sensual, or blent at best with tenderness—a physical love-longing, a sentiment born of youth and desire. A girl, for instance, speaks about herself, and says:<sup>43</sup>

Colui che muove il cielo et ogni stella  
 Mi fece a suo diletto  
 Vaga leggiadra graziosa e bella,  
 Per dar qua diù ad ogni alto intelletto  
 Alcun segno di quella  
 Beltà che sempre a lui sta nel cospetto.

On the lips of him who wrote the tale of Alibech, this language savours of profanity. Yet we are forced to recognise the poet's sincerity of feeling. It is the same problem as that which meets us in the 'Amorosa Visione'.<sup>44</sup> The god Boccaccio worshipped was changed; but this deity was still divine, and deserved, he thought, the honours of mystic adoration. At the same time there is nothing Asiatic in his sensuous inspiration. The emotion is controlled and concentrated; the form is pure in all its outlines.

The 'Decameron' was the masterpiece of Boccaccio's maturity. But he did not reach that height of excellence without numerous essays in styles of much diversity. While still a young man, not long after his meeting with Fiammetta, he began the 'Filocopo' and dedicated it to his new love.<sup>45</sup> This romance was based upon the earlier tale of 'Floire et Blanceflor'.<sup>46</sup> But the youthful poet invested the simple love-story of his Florio and Biancofiore with a masquerade costume of mythological erudition and wordy rhetoric, which removed it from the middle ages. The gods and goddesses of Olympus are introduced as living agents, supplying the machinery of the romance until the very end, when the hero and heroine are converted to Christianity, and abjure their old

<sup>43</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 160.

<sup>44</sup> See above, p. 903.

<sup>45</sup> This appears from the conclusion (*Op. Volg.* viii. 376). Fiammetta was the natural daughter of Petrarch's friend and patron, King Robert. Boccaccio first saw her in the church of S. Lawrence at Naples, April 7, 1341.

<sup>46</sup> The history of this widely popular mediæval romance has been traced by Du Méril in his edition of the thirteenth-century French version (Paris, 1856). He is of opinion that Boccaccio may have derived it from some Byzantine source. But this seems hardly probable, since Boccaccio gained his knowledge of Greek later in life. Certain indications in the *Filocopo* point to a Spanish original.

protectors with cold equanimity. We are left to imagine that, for Boccaccio at any rate, Venus, Mars and Cupid were as real as Christ and the saints, though superseded as objects of pious veneration. This confusion of Pagan and Christian mythology is increased by his habit of finding classical periphrases for the expression of religious ideas. He calls nuns *Sacerdotesse di Diana*. God the Father is *Quell' eccelso e inestimabile principe Sommo Giove*. Satan becomes Pluto, and human sin is Atropos. The birth of Christ is described thus: *la terra come sentì il nuovo incarco della deità del figliuol di Giove*. The Apostles appear as *nuovi cavalieri entrati contro a Plutone in campo*.<sup>47</sup> The style of the 'Filocopo' was new; and in spite, or perhaps because of, its euphuism, it had a decided success. This encouraged Boccaccio to attempt the 'Teseide.' The 'Filostrato' soon followed; and here for the first time we find the future author of the 'Decameron.' Under Greek names and incidents borrowed from the War of Troy, we are in fact studying some episode from the *chroniques galantes* of the Neapolitan Court, narrated with the vigour of a perfect master in the art of story-telling. Nothing could be further removed in sentiment from the heroism of the Homeric age or closer to the customs of a corrupt Italian city than this poem. In Troilo himself a feverish type of character, overmastered by passion which is rather a delirium of the senses than a mood of feeling, has been painted with a force that reminds us of the 'Fiammetta,' where the same disease of the soul is delineated in a woman. Pandaro shows for the first time in modern literature an utterly depraved nature, revelling in seduction, and glutting a licentious imagination with the spectacle of satiated lust. The frenzied appetite of Troilo, Pandaro's ruffian arts, and the gradual yieldings of Griselda to a voluptuous inclination, reveal the master's hand; and though the poem is hurried toward the close (Boccaccio being only interested in the portrayal of his hero's love-languors, ecstasies and disappointment), the 'Filostrato' must undoubtedly be reckoned the finest of his narratives in verse. The second and third Cantos are remarkable for dramatic movement and wealth of sensuous imagination, never rising to sublimity nor refined with such poetry as Shakspeare found for Romeo and Juliet, but welling copiously from a genuinely ardent nature. The love described is nakedly and unaffectedly luxurious; it is an overmastering impulse, crowned at last with all the joys of sensual fruition. According to Boccaccio the repose conferred by Love upon his votaries is the satiety of their desires.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>47</sup> See *Op. Volg.* vii. 6-11. Compare with these phrases those selected from the humanistic writings of a later date, *Revival of Learning*, p. 511.

<sup>48</sup> This is the climax (Parte Terza, stanza xxxii.):

A cui Troilo disse; anima mia,  
 I' te ne prego sì ch' io t' abbia in braccio  
 Ignuda sì come il mio cor disia.  
 Ed ella allora: ve' che me ne spaccio;  
 E la camicia sua gittata via,  
 Nelle sue braccia si raccolse avaccio;  
 E strignendo l' un l' altro con fervore,  
 D' amor sentiron l' ultimo valore.

Between Dante's 'Signore della nobilitade' and his 'Sir di tutta pace' there is indeed a wide gulf fixed.<sup>49</sup>

After the 'Filostrato,' Boccaccio next produced the 'Ameto,' 'Amorosa Visione,' 'Fiammetta,' 'Ninfale Fiesolano,' and 'Corbaccio,' between the years 1343 and 1355. The 'Ameto' is a tissue of pastoral tales, descriptions, and versified interludes, prolix in style and affected with pedantic erudition. To read it attentively is now almost impossible, in spite of frequent passages where the luxuriant word-painting of the author is conspicuous. In the 'Amorosa Visione' he attempted the style which Petrarch had adopted for his 'Trionfi.' After reviewing human life under the several aspects of learning, glory, love, fortune, the poet finally resigns himself to a Nirvana of sensual beatitude. The poem is unsuccessful, because it adapts an obsolete form of art to requirements beyond its scope. Boccaccio tries to pour the new wine of the Renaissance into the old bottles of mediæval allegory. In the 'Fiammetta' Boccaccio exhibited all his strength as an anatomist of feeling, describing the effects of passion in a woman's heart, and analysing its varying emotions with a subtlety which proved his knowledge of a certain type of female character. It is the first attempt in modern literature to portray subjective emotion exterior to the writer. Since Virgil's Dido, or the 'Heroidum Epistolæ' of Ovid, nothing of the sort had been essayed upon an equal scale. Taken together with Dante's 'Vita Nuova' and Petrarch's 'Secretum,' each of which is a personal confidence, the 'Fiammetta' may be reckoned among those masterpieces of analytic art, which revealed the developed consciousness of the Italian race, at a moment when the science of emotion was still for the rest of Europe an undiscovered territory. This essay exercised a wide and lasting influence over the descriptive literature of the Renaissance. Yet when we compare its stationary monologues with the brief but pregnant touches of the 'Decameron,' we are forced to assign it the rank of a study rather than a finished picture. The 'Fiammetta' is to the 'Decameron' what rhetoric is to the drama. This, however, is hardly a deduction from its merit. The delineation of an unholy and unhappy passion, blessed with fruition for one brief moment, cursed through months of illness and

<sup>49</sup> The *Amorosa Visione* ends with these words, *Sir di tutta pace*; their meaning is explained in previous passages of the same poem. At the end of cap. xlv, the lady says:

Io volli ora al presente far quieto,  
Il tuo disio con amorosa pace,  
Dandoti l' arra che finirà il fletto.

Again in cap. l. we read:

E quel disio che or più ti tormenta  
Porrò in pace, con quella bellezza  
Che l' alma al cor tuttora ti presenta.

The context reveals the nature of the peace to be attained. It is the satisfaction of an orgasm. We may compare the invocation to Venus and her promise at the end of the *Caccia di Diana*, canto xvii. (*Op. Volg.* xiv.) The time-honoured language about 'expelling all base thoughts' is here combined with the anticipation of sensual possession.

despair with all the furies of vain desire and poignant recollection, is executed with incomparable fulness of detail and inexhaustible richness of fancy. The reader rises from a perusal of the 'Fiammetta' with impressions similar to those which a work of Richardson leaves upon the mind. At the same time it is full of poetry. The Vision of Venus, the invocation to Sleep, and the description of summer on the Bay of Baiæ relieve a deliberate anatomy of passion, which might otherwise be tedious.<sup>50</sup> The romance is so rich in material that it furnished the motives for a score of tales, and the novelists of the Renaissance availed themselves freely of its copious stores.<sup>51</sup>

The 'Corbaccio' or 'I aberinto d' Amore' is a satire upon women, animated with the bitterest sense of injury and teeming with vindictive spite. It was written with the avowed purpose of reviling a lady who had rejected Boccaccio's advances, and it paints the whole sex in the darkest colours. We could fancy that certain passages had been penned by a disappointed monk. Though this work is in tone unworthy of its author, it bore fruits in the literature of the next century. Alberti's satires are but rhetorical amplifications of themes suggested by the 'Corbaccio.' Nor is it without value for the student of Italian manners. The list of romances read by women in the fourteenth century throws light upon Francesca's episode in Dante, and proves that the title 'Principe Galeotto' was not given without precedent to Boccaccio's own writings.<sup>52</sup> The discourse on gentle birth in the same treatise should be studied in illustration of the Florentine conception of nobility.<sup>53</sup> Boccaccio, though he follows so closely in time upon Dante, already anticipates the democratic theories of Poggio.<sup>54</sup> Feudal feeling was extinct in the *bourgeoisie* of the great towns; nor had the experience of the Neapolitan Court suppressed in Boccaccio's mind the pride of a Florentine citizen. At the same time he felt that contempt of the literary classes for the common folk which was destined in the next century to divide the nation and to check the development of its vulgar literature. He apologises for explaining Dante, and for bringing poetry down to the level of the *feccia plebeia*, the *vulgo indegno*, the *ingrati meccanici*, and so forth.<sup>55</sup>

It remains to speak of yet another of Boccaccio's minor works, the 'Ninfale Fiesolano.' This is a tale in octave stanzas, which, under a veil of mythological romance, relates the loves of a young man and a nun, and their subsequent tragic ending. It owes its interest to the vivid picture of seduction, so glowingly painted as to betray the author's personal enjoyment of the motive. The story is thrown back into a

<sup>50</sup> *Op. Volg.* vi. 21, 89, 91.

<sup>51</sup> Bonucci in his edition of Alberti's works, conscious of that author's debt to Boccaccio, advances the wild theory that he wrote the *Fiammetta*. See *Opere Volgari di L. B. Alberti* vol. iii. p. 353.

<sup>52</sup> *Laberinto d' Amore* (Firenze, Caselli), p. 153 and p. 127.

<sup>53</sup> *Laberinto d' Amore*, p. 174.

<sup>54</sup> See *Age of the Despots*, p. 94, note.

<sup>55</sup> See Sonnets vii. and viii. of the *Rime*.



time antecedent to Christianity and civil life. The heroine, Mensola, is a nymph of Diana; the hero, Affrico, a shepherd. The scene is laid among the mountains above Florence; and when Mensola has been changed into a fountain by the virgin goddess, whose rites she violated, the poem concludes with a myth invented to explain the founding of Fiesole. Civil society succeeds to the savagery of the woodland, and love is treated as the vestibule to culture.<sup>56</sup> The romantic and legendary portions of this tale are ill-connected. The versification is lax; and except in the long episode of Mensola's seduction, which might have formed a passage of contemporary novel-writing, the genius of Boccaccio shines with clouded lustre.<sup>57</sup> Yet the 'Ninfale Fiesolano' occupies a not unimportant place in the history of Italian literature. It adapts the pastoral form to that ideal of civility dependent upon culture, which took so strong a hold upon the imagination of the *cinque cento*. Its stanzas are a forecast of the 'Arcadia' and the 'Orfeo.'

In the minor poems and romances, which have here been passed in review, except perhaps in the 'Fiammetta,' Boccaccio cannot be said to take a place among European writers of the first rank. His style is prolix; his versification, if we omit the 'Canzoni a Ballo' and some sonnets, is slovenly; nor does he show exceptional ability in the conception and conduct of his stories. He is strongest when he paints a violent passion or describes voluptuous sensations, weakest when he attempts allegory or assumes the airs of a philosopher. We feel, in reading these productions of his earlier manhood, that nearly all were what the Germans call 'Gelegenheitsgedichte.' The private key is lost to some of these works, which were intended for the ears of one among the multitude. On others it is plainly written that they were the outpourings of a personal desire, the self-indulgence of a fancy which revelled in imagined sensuality, using literature as the safety-valve for subjective longings. They lack the calm of perfect art, the full light falling on the object from without, which marks a poem of the highest order. From these romances of his youth, no less than from the Latin treatises of his maturity, we return to the 'Decameron' when we seek to place Boccaccio among the classics. Nothing comparable with this Human Comedy for universal interest had appeared in modern Europe, if we except the 'Divine Comedy;' and it may be questioned whether any work of equal scope was given to the world before the theatre of Shakspeare and the comedies of Molière. Boccaccio, though he paints the surface of life, paints it in a way to suggest the inner springs of character, and to bring the motives of action vividly before us. *Quicquid agunt homines* is the matter of his book. The recoil from mediæval

<sup>56</sup> The same motive occurs in the *Ameto*, where the power of love to refine a rustic nature is treated both in the prose romance and in he interpolated *terza rima* poems. See especially the song of Teogapen (*Op. Volg.* xv. 34).

<sup>57</sup> Boccaccio breaks the style and becomes obscenely vulgar at times. See Parte Quarta, xxxvi. xxxvii., Parte Quinta, xlv. xlv. The innuendoes of the *Ugellino* and the *Nicchio* are here repeated in figures which anticipate the novels and *capitoli* of the *cinque cento*.



principles of conduct, which gives it a certain air of belonging to a moment rather than all time, was necessary in the evolution of intellectual freedom. In this respect, again, it faithfully reflected the Florentine temperament. At no epoch have the Italians been sternly and austere pious. Piety with them is a passionate impulse rather than a deeply reasoned habit based upon conviction. Their true nature is critical, susceptible to beauty, quick at seizing the ridiculous and exposing shams, suspicious of mysticism, realistic, pleasure-loving, practical. These qualities, special to the Florentines, but shared in large measure by the nation, found artistic expression in the 'Decameron,' and asserted their supremacy in the literature of the Renaissance. That a sublime ideal, unapprehended by Boccaccio, and destined to remain unrepresented in the future, should have been conceived by Dante; that Petrarch should have modulated by his masterpiece of poetic workmanship from the key of the 'Divine Comedy' to that of the 'Decameron;' that one city should have produced three such men, and that one half-century should have witnessed their successive triumphs, forms the great glory of Florence, and is one of the most notable facts in the history of genius.

It remains to speak about Boccaccio's prose, and the relation of his style to that of other *trecentisti*. If we seek the origins of Italian prose, we find them first in the Franco-Italian romances of the Lombard period, which underwent the process of *toscaneggiamento* at Florence, next in books of morality and devotion, and also in the earlier chronicles. Among the Tuscanised tales of chivalry belonging to the first age of Italian literature are the 'Conti di Antichi Cavalieri' and the 'Tavola Ritonda,' both of which bear traces of translation from Provençal sources.<sup>58</sup> The 'Novellino,' of which mention has already been made, betrays the same origin. The style of these works offers a pretty close parallel to the English of Sir Thomas Mallory. At the same time that the literature of France was assuming an Italian garb, many versions of Roman classics appeared. Orosius, Vegetius, Sallust, with parts of Cicero, Livy, and Boethius, were adapted to popular reading. But the taste of the time, as we have already seen in the preceding chapter, inclined the authors of these works to make selections with a view to moral edification. Their object was, not to present the ancients in a modern garb, but to cull notable examples of conduct and ethical sentences from the works that found most favour with the mediæval intellect. Passing under the general titles of 'Fiori,' 'Giardini,' 'Tesori,' and 'Conviti'—'Fiori di filosofi e molto savi,' 'Giardino di Consolazione,' 'Fiore di Rettorica,' 'Fiore del parlar gentile'—these collections supplied the laity with extracts from Latin authors, and extended culture to the people. The 'Libro di Cato' might be chosen as a fair example of their

<sup>58</sup> Students may consult the valuable work of Vincenzo Nannucci, *Manuale della Letteratura del primo secolo della Lingua Italiana*, Firenze, Barbèra, 1874. The second volume contains copious specimens of thirteenth-century prose.

scope.<sup>59</sup> The number of such books, ascribed to Bono Giamboni, Brunetto Latini, and Guidotto of Bologna, proves that an extensive public was eager for instruction of this sort; and it is reasonable to believe that they were studied by the artisans of central Italy. The bas-reliefs and frescoes of incipient Italian art, the pavement of the Sienese Cathedral, the Palazzo della Ragione at Padua, bear traces of the percolation through all social strata of this literature. A more important work of style was the 'De Regimine Principum,' of Egidio Colonna, translated from the French version by an unknown Tuscan hand; while Giamboni's Florentine version of Latini's 'Tesoro' introduced the erudition of the most learned grammarian of his age to the Italians. Contemporaneously with this growth of vernacular treatises on rhetorical and ethical subjects, we may assume that memoirs and chronicles began to be written in the vulgar tongue. But so much doubt has recently been thrown upon the earliest monuments of Italian historiography that it must here suffice to indicate the change which was undoubtedly taking place in this branch also of composition toward the close of the thirteenth century.<sup>60</sup> Literature of all kinds yielded to the first strong impact of the native idiom. Epistles, for example, whether of private or of public import, were now occasionally written in Italian, as can be proved by reference to the published letters of Guittone d' Arezzo.<sup>61</sup>

The works hitherto mentioned belong to the latter half of the thirteenth century. Their style, speaking generally, is dry and tentative. Except in the versions of French romances, which borrow grace from their originals, we do not find in them artistic charm of diction. The 'Fiori' and 'Giardini' are little better than common-place books, in which the author's personality is lost beneath a mass of extracts and citations. The beginning of the fourteenth century witnessed the growth of a new Italian prose. Of this second stage, the masterpieces are Villani's Chronicle, Dante's 'Vita Nuova,' the 'Fioretti di S. Francesco,' the 'Leggende dei Santi Padri' of Domenico Cavalca, and Jacopo Passavanti's 'Specchio della vera Penitenza.'<sup>62</sup> These writers have no lack of individuality. Their mind moves in their style, and gives a personal complexion to their utterance. The chief charm of their manner, so far as it is common to characters so diverse, is its grave and childlike spontaneity. For vividness of description, for natural simplicity of phrase, and for that amiable garrulity which rounds a picture by in-

<sup>59</sup> Nannucci, *op. cit.* vol. ii. p. 95.

<sup>60</sup> The journals of Matteo Spinelli, ascribed to an Apulian of the thirteenth century, were long accepted as the earliest vernacular attempt at history in prose. It has lately been suggested, with good show of argument, that they are fabrications of the sixteenth century. With regard to the similar doubts affecting the Malespini Chronicles and Dino Compagni, I may refer to my discussion of this question in *Age of the Despots*, pp. 127, 132-139.

<sup>61</sup> Nannucci, *op. cit.* p. 137.

<sup>62</sup> Of Villani's Chronicle I have already spoken sufficiently in *Age of the Despots*, chap. v., and of the *Vita Nuova* in this chapter (above, pp. 879-881).

numerable details and unconscious touches of graphic force, not one of the books of this period surpasses the 'Fioretti.' Nor are the 'Leggende' of Cavalca less admirable. Modern, especially Northern, students may discover too much suavity and unction in the writer's tone—a superfluity of sweetness which fatigues, a caressing tenderness that clogs. After reading a few pages, we lay the book down, and wonder whether it could really have been a grown man, and not a cherub flown from Fra Angelico's Paradise, who composed it. This infantine note belongs to the cloister and the pulpit. It matches the simple credulity of the narrator, and well befits the miracles he loves to record. We seem to hear a good old monk gossiping to a party of rosy-cheeked novices, like those whom Sodoma painted in his frescoes of S. Benedict at Monte Oliveto. It need hardly be observed that neither in Villani's nor in Dante's prose do we find the same puerility. But all the *trecentisti* have a common character of limpidity, simplicity, and unaffected grace.

The difficulties under which even the best Italian authors labour while using their own language, incline them to an exaggerated admiration for these pearls of the *Trecento*. They look back with envy to an age when men could write exactly as they thought and felt and spoke, without the tyranny of the *Vocabolario* or the fear of an Academy before their eyes. We, with whom the literary has always closely followed the spoken language, and who have, practically speaking, no dialects, while we recognise the purity of that incomparably transparent manner, cannot comprehend that it should be held up for imitation in the present age. To paint like Giotto would be easier than to write like Passavanti. The conditions of life and the modes of thought are so altered that the style of the *Trecento* will not lend itself to modern requirements.

Among the prosaists of the fourteenth century—Cavalca, Villani, the author of the 'Fioretti,' and Passavanti—Boccaccio meets us with a sudden surprise. They aimed at finding the readiest and most appropriate words to convey their meaning in the simplest, most effective manner. Without artistic purpose, without premeditation, without side-glances at the classics, they wrote straightforward from their heart. There is little composition or connection in their work, no moulding of paragraphs or rounding of phrases, no oratorical development, no gradation of tone. Boccaccio, on the contrary, sought to give the fulness and sonority of Latin to the periods of Italian prose. He had the Ciceronian cadence and the labyrinthine sentences of Livy in view. By art of style he was bent on rendering the vulgar language a fit vehicle for learning, rhetoric, and history. In order to make it clear what sorts of changes he introduced, it will be necessary to compare his prose with that of his contemporaries. Dante used the following words to describe his first meeting with Beatrice:<sup>63</sup>

Nove fiate già, appresso al mio nascimento, era tornato lo cielo della luce quasi ad un medesimo punto, quanto alla sua propria girazione, quando, alli miei occhi

<sup>63</sup> *Vita Nuova*, cap. 2.

apparve prima la gloriosa Donna della mia mente, la quale fu chiamata da molti Beatrice, i quali non sapeano che si chiamare. Ella era già in questa vita stata tanto che nel suo tempo lo cielo stellato era mosso verso la parte d' oriente delle dodici parti l' una d' un grado: sì che quasi dal principio del suo anno nono apparve a me, ed io la vidi quasi alla fine del mio nono anno.

Boccaccio, relating his first glimpse of Fiammetta on April 17, 1341, spins the following cocoon of verbiage:<sup>64</sup>

Avvenne che un giorno, la cui prima ora Saturno avea signoreggiata, essendo già Febo co' suoi cavalli al sedecimo grado del celestiale Montone pervenuto, e nel quale il glorioso partimento del figliuolo di Giove dagli spogliati regni di Plutone si celebrava, io, della presente opera compositore, mi trovai in un grazioso e bel tempio in Partenope, nominato da colui che per deficarsi sostenne che fosse fatto di lui sacrificio sopra la grata, e quivi con canto pieno di dolce melodia ascoltava l' ufficio che in tale giorno si canta, celebrato da' sacerdoti successori di colui che prima la corda cinse umilmente esaltando la povertade quella seguendo.

Dante's style is analytic and direct. The sentences follow each other naturally; and though the language is stiff, from scrupulous precision, and in one place intentionally obscure, it is free from affectation. Boccaccio aims at a synthetic presentation of all he means to say; and he calls nothing by its right name, if he can devise a periphrasis. The breathless period pants its laboured clauses out, and dwindles to a lame conclusion. The 'Filocopo' was, however, an immature production. In order to do its author justice, and at the same time to compare his style with a graceful piece of fourteenth-century composition, I will select a passage from the 'Fioretti di S. Francesco,' and place it beside one taken from the first novel of the 'Decameron.' This is the episode of S. Anthony preaching to the fishes:<sup>65</sup>

E detto ch' egli ebbe così, subitamente venne alla riva a lui tanta moltitudine di pesci, grandi, piccoli e mezzani, che mai in quel mare nè in quel fiume non ne fu veduta sì grande moltitudine: e tutti teneano i capi fuori dell' acqua, e tutti stavano attenti verso la faccia di santo Antonio, e tutti in grandissima pace e mansuetudine e ordine: imperocchè dinanzi e più presso alla riva stavano i pesciolini minori, e dopo loro stavano i pesci mezzani, poi di dietro, dov' era l' acqua più profonda, stavano i pesci maggiori. Essendo dunque in cotale ordine e disposizione allogati i pesci, santo Antonio cominciò a predicare solennemente, e disse così: Fratelli miei pesci, molto siete tenuti, secondo la vostra possibilità, di ringraziare il nostro Creatore, che v' ha dato così nobile elemento per vostra abitazione; sicchè, come vi piace, avete l' acque dolci e salse; e havvi dati molti rifugii a schifare le tempeste; havvi ancora dato elemento chiaro e trasparente, e cibo, per lo quale voi possiate vivere, etc., etc. . . . A queste e simiglianti parole e ammaestramenti di santo Antonio, cominciarono li pesci ad aprire la bocca, inchinaronli i capi, e con questi ed altri segnali di riverenza, secondo li modi a loro possibili, laudaronlo Iddio.

This is a portion of the character of Ser Ciappelletto:

Era questo Ciappelletto di questa vita. Egli essendo notajo, avea grandissima vergogna quando uno de' suoi strumenti (come che pochi ne facesse) fosse altro che falso trovato; de' quali tanti avrebbe fatti, di quanti fosse stato richiesto, e quelli più volentieri in dono, che alcun altro grandemente salariato. Testimonianze false con

<sup>64</sup> *Filocopo*, Op. Volg. vii. 4.

<sup>65</sup> *Fioretti di S. Francesco* (Venezia, 1853), p. 104.

sommo diletto diceva richesto e non richesto; e dandosi a' que' tempi in Francia a' saramenti grandissima fede, non curandosi fargli falsi, tante quistioni malvagiamente vincea, a quante a giurare di dire il vero sopra la sua fede era chiamato. Aveva oltre modo piacere, e forte vi studiava, in commettere tra amici e parenti e qualunque altra persona mali et inimicizie e scandali; de' quali quanto maggiori mali vedeva seguire, tanto più d' allegrezza prendea. Invitato ad uno omicidio o a qualunque altra rea cosa, senza negarlo mai, volenterosamente v' andava; e più volte a fedire et ad uccidere uomini colle proprie mani si trovò volentieri.

These examples will suffice to show how Boccaccio distinguished himself from the *trecentisti* in general. When his style attained perfection in the 'Decameron,' it had lost the pedantry of his first manner, and combined the brevity of the best contemporary writers with rhetorical smoothness and intricacy. The artful structure of the period, and the cadences of what afterwards came to be known as 'numerous prose,' were carried to perfection. Still, though he was the earliest writer of a scientific style, Boccaccio failed to exercise a paramount influence over the language until the age of the Academies.<sup>66</sup> The writers of the fifteenth century, partly no doubt because these were chiefly men of the people, appear to have developed their manner out of the material of the *Trecento* in general, modified by contemporary usage. This is manifest in the 'Reali di Francia,' a work of considerable stylistic power, which cannot probably be dated earlier than the middle of the fifteenth century. The novelist Masuccio modelled his diction, so far as he was able, on the type of the 'Decameron,' and Alberti owed much to the study of such works as the 'Fiammetta.' Yet, speaking broadly, neither the excellences nor the defects of Boccaccio found devoted imitators until the epoch when the nation at large turned their attention to the formation of a common Italian style. It was then, in the days of Bembo and Sperone, that Boccaccio took rank with Petrarch as an infallible authority on points of language. The homage rendered at that period to the 'Decameron' decided the destinies of Italian prose, and has since been deplored by critics who believe Boccaccio to have established a false standard of taste.<sup>67</sup> This is a question which must be left to the Italians to decide. One thing, however, is clear; that a nation schooled by humanistic studies of a Latin type, divided by their dialects, and removed by the advance of culture beyond the influences of the purer *trecentisti*, found in the rhetorical diction of the 'Decameron' a common model better suited to their taste and capacity than the simple style of the Villani could have furnished.

Boccaccio died in 1375, seventeen months after the death at Arquà of his master, Petrarch. The painter Andrea Orcagna died about the same period. With these three great artists the genius of mediæval Florence sank to sleep. A temporary torpor fell upon the people, who during the next half century produced nothing of marked originality in

<sup>66</sup> See below, the chapter on the Purists.

<sup>67</sup> See Capponi's *Storia della Repubblica di Firenze*, lib. iii. cap. 9, for a very energetic statement of this view.

literature and art. The Middle Age had passed away. The Renaissance was still in preparation. When Boccaccio breathed his last, men felt that the elder sources of inspiration had failed, and that no more could be expected from the spirit of the previous centuries. Heaven and hell, the sanctuaries of the soul, the garden of this earth, had been traversed. The tentative essays and scattered preludings, the dreams and visions, the preparatory efforts of all previous modern literatures, had been completed, harmonised and presented to the world in the master-works of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio. What remained but to make a new start? This step forward or aside was now to be taken in the Classical Revival. Well might Sacchetti exclaim in that *canzone*<sup>68</sup> which is at once Boccaccio's funeral dirge and also the farewell of Florence to the fourteenth century:

Sonati sono i corni  
D' ogni parte a ricolta;  
La stagione è rivolta:  
Se tornerà non so, ma credo tardi.

<sup>68</sup> See *Rime di M. Cino da Pistoja e d' altri del Secolo xiv* (Firenze, Barbèra, 1862), p. 528. It begins:

Ora è mancata ogni poësia  
E vote son le case di Parnaso.

It contains the famous lines:

Come deggio sperar che surga Dante,  
Che già chi il sappia legger non si trova?  
E Giovanni che è morto ne fe scola.

Not less interesting is Sacchetti's funeral Ode for Petrarch (*ibid.* p. 517). Both show a keen sense of the situation with respect to the decline of literature.

## CHAPTER III

### THE TRANSITION

*The Church, Chivalry, the Nation—The National Element in Italian Literature—Florence—Italy between 1373 and 1490—Renascent Nationality—Absorption in Scholarship—Vernacular Literature follows an obscure Course—Final Junction of the Humanistic and Popular Currents—Renaissance of Italian—The Italian Temperament—Importance of the 'Quattrocento'—Sacchetti's Novels—Ser Giovanni's 'Pecorone'—Sacchetti's and Ser Giovanni's Poetry—Lyrics of the Villa and the Piazza—Niccolò Soldanieri—Alesso Donati—His Realistic Poems—Followers of Dante and Petrarch—Political Poetry of the Guelphs and Ghibellines—Fazio degli Uberti—Saviozzo da Siena—Elegies on Dante—Sacchetti's Gueft Poems—Advent of the Bourgeoisie—Discouragement of the Age—Fazio's 'Dittamondo'—Rome and Alvernia—Frezzi's 'Quadreregio'—Dantesque Imitation—Blending of Classical and Mediæval Motives—Matteo Palmieri's 'Città di Vita'—The Fate of Terza Rima—Catherine of Siena—Her Letters—S. Bernardino's Sermons—Salutati's Letters—Alessandra degli Strozzi—Florentine Annalists—Giov. Cavalcanti—Corio's 'History of Milan'—Matarazzo's 'Chronicle of Perugia'—Masuccio and his 'Novellino'—His Style and Genius—Alberti—Born in Exile—His Feeling for Italian—Enthusiasm for the Roman Past—The Treatise on the Family—Its Plan—Digression on the Problem of its Authorship—Pandolfini or Alberti—The 'Deiciarchia'—'Tranquillità dell' Animo'—'Teogenio'—Alberti's Religion—Dedication of the Treatise on Painting—Minor Works in Prose on Love—'Ecatomfila,' 'Amiria,' 'Deifuria,' &c.—Misogynism—Novel of 'Ippolito and Leonora'—Alberti's Poetry—Review of Alberti's Character and his Relation to the Age—Francesco Colonna—The 'Hypnerotomachia Poliphili'—Its Style—Its Importance as a Work of the Transition—A Romance of Art, Love, Humanism—The Allegory—Polia—Antiquity—Relation of this Book to Boccaccio and Valla—It foreshadows the Renaissance.*

THE two preceding chapters will have made it clear that the Church Chivalry, and the Nation contributed their several quotas to the growth of Italian literature.<sup>1</sup> The ecclesiastical or religious element, so triumphantly expressed in the 'Divine Comedy,' was not peculiar to the Italians. They held it in common with the whole of Christendom; and though the fabric of the Roman Church took form in Italy, though the race gave S. Francis, S. Thomas, and S. Bonaventura to the militia of the mediæval faith, still the Italians as a nation were not specifically religious. Piety, which is quite a different thing from ecclesiastical organisation, was never the truest and sincerest accent of their genius. Had it been so, the history of Latin Christianity would have followed

<sup>1</sup> I may refer to *Age of the Despots*, pp. 31-34, for a brief review of the circumstances under which the Nation defined itself against the Church and the Empire—the ecclesiastical and feudal or chivalrous principles—during the Wars of Investiture and Independence. In Carducci's essay *Dello Svolgimento della Letteratura nazionale* will be found an eloquent and succinct exposition of the views I have attempted to express in these paragraphs.



another course, and the schism of the sixteenth century might have been avoided.

The chivalrous element they shared, at a considerable disadvantage, with the rest of feudal Europe. Chivalry was not indigenous to Italian soil, nor did it ever flourish there. The literature which it produced in France, became Italian only when the Guidi and Dante gave it philosophical significance. Petrarch, who represents this motive, as Dante represents the ecclesiastical, generalised Provençal poetry. His 'Canzoniere' cannot be styled a masterpiece of chivalrous art. Its spirit is modern and human in a wider and more comprehensive sense.

To characterise the national strain in this complex pedigree of culture is no easy task—chiefly because it manifested itself under two apparently antagonistic forms; first in the recovery of the classics by the scholars of the fifteenth century; secondly in the portraiture of Italian character and temperament by writers of romance and fiction. The divergence of these two main currents of literary energy upon the close of the middle ages, and their junction in the prime of the Renaissance, are the topics of my present volume.

We have seen how tenaciously the Italians clung to memories of ancient Rome, and how their history deprived them of that epical material which started modern literature among the northern races. While the vulgar language was being formed from the dialects into which rustic Latin had divided, a new nationality grew into shape by an analogous process out of the remnants of the old Italic population, fused with recent immigrants. Absorbing Greek blood in the south and Teutonic in the north, this composite race maintained the ascendancy of the Romanised people, in obedience to laws whereby the prevalent and indigenous strain outlives and assimilates ingredients from without. Owing to a variety of causes, among which must be reckoned geographical isolation and imperfect Lombard occupation, the purest Italic stock survived upon the Tuscan plains and highlands, between the Tyrrhene Sea and the Apennines, and where the Arno and the Tiber start together from the mountains of Arezzo. This region was the cradle of the new Italian language, the stronghold of the new Italian nation. Its centre, political, commercial and intellectual, was Florence, which gave birth to the three great poets of the fourteenth century. Though Florence developed her institutions later than the Lombard communes, she maintained a civic independence longer than any State but Venice; and her *popolo* may be regarded as the type of the popular Italian element. Here the genius of Italy became conscious of itself, and here the people found a spokesman in Boccaccio. Abandoning ecclesiastical and feudal traditions, Boccaccio concentrated his force upon the delineation of his fellow-countrymen as he had learned to know them. The Italians of the new age start into distinctness in his work, with the specific qualities they were destined to maintain and to mature during the next two centuries. Thus Boccaccio fully represents one factor of what I have called the national element. At the same

time, he occupies a hardly less important place in relation to the other or the humanistic factor. Like his master Petrarch, he pronounced with ardour and decision for that scholarship which restored the link between the present and the past of the Italian race. Independently of their achievements in modern literature, we have to regard the humanistic efforts of these two great writers as a sign that the national element had asserted itself in antagonism to the Church and chivalry.

The recovery of the classics was, in truth, the decisive fact in Italian evolution. Having attained full consciousness in the Florence of Dante's age, the people set forth in search of their spiritual patrimony. They found it in the libraries. They became possessed of it through the labours of the scholars. Italian literature during the first three-quarters of the fifteenth century merged, so far as polite society was concerned, in Humanism, the history of which has already been presented to the reader in the second section of this work.<sup>2</sup> For a hundred years, from the publication of the 'Decameron' in 1373 to the publication of Poliziano's 'Stanze,' the genius of Italy was engaged in an exploratory pilgrimage, the ultimate end of which was the restoration of the national inheritance in ancient Rome. This process of renascent classicism, which was tantamount to renascent nationality, retarded the growth of the vulgar literature. Yet it was imperatively demanded not only by the needs of Europe at large, but more particularly and urgently by the Italians themselves, who, unlike the other modern races, had no starting-point but ancient Rome. The immediate result of the humanistic movement was the separation of the national element into two sections, learned and popular, Latin and Italian. The common people, who had repeated Dante's 'Canzoni,' and whose life Boccaccio had portrayed in the 'Decameron,' were now divided from the rising class of scholars and professors. Cultivated persons of all ranks despised Italian, and spent their time in studies beyond the reach of the laity. Like some mountain rivers after emerging from the highlands of their origin, the vernacular literature passed as it were for a season underground, and lost itself in unexplored ravines. Absorbed into the masses of the people, it continued an obscure but by no means insignificant course, whence it was destined to reappear at the right moment, when the several constituents of the nation had attained the sense of intellectual unity. This sense of unity was the product of the classical revival; for the activity of the wandering professors and the fanatical enthusiasm for the ancients were needed to create a common consciousness, a common standard of taste and intelligence in the peninsula. It must in this connection be remembered that the vernacular literature of the fourteenth century, though it afterwards became the glory of Italy as a whole, was originally Florentine. The medium prepared by the scholars was demanded in order that the Tuscan classics should be accepted by the nation as their own. Toward the close of the fifteenth century, a fusion between the humanistic and the vulgar literatures was

<sup>2</sup> *Revival of Learning.*

made; and this is the renaissance of Italian—no longer Tuscan, but participated in by the race at large. The poetry of the people then received a form refined by classic learning; and the two sections of what I have called the national element, joined to produce the genuine Italian culture of the golden age.

It is necessary, for the sake of clearness, to insist upon this point, which forms the main motive of my present theme. After the death of Boccaccio the history of Italian literature is the history of that national element which distinguished itself from the ecclesiastical and the chivalrous, and at last in the 'Decameron' asserted its superiority over both. But the stream of intellectual energy bifurcates. During the fifteenth century, the Latin instincts of the new Italic people found vigorous expansion in the humanistic movement, while the vernacular literature carried on a fitful and obscure, but potent, growth among the proletariat. At the end of that century, both currents, the learned and the popular, the classical and the modern, reunited on a broader plane. The nation, educated by scholarship and brought to a sense of its identity, resumed the vulgar tongue; and what had hitherto been Tuscan, now became Italian. In this renaissance neither the religious nor the feudal principle regained firm hold upon the race. Their influence is still discernible, however, in the lyrics of the Petrarchisti and the epics of Orlando; for nothing which has once been absorbed into a people's thought is wholly lost. How they were transmuted by the action of the genuine Italic genius, triumphant now upon all quarters of the field, will appear in the sequel; while it remains for another section of this work to show in what way, under the influences of the Counter-Reformation, both the ecclesiastical and the chivalrous elements reasserted themselves for a brief moment in Tasso. Still even in Tasso we recognise the Italian courtier rather than the knight or the ascetic. For the rest, it is clear that the spirit of Boccaccio—that is, the spirit of the Florentine people—refined by humanistic discipline and glorified by the reawakening of Italy to a sense of intellectual unity, determined the character of literature during its most brilliant period.<sup>3</sup>

Many peculiarities of the Renaissance in Italy, and of the Renaissance in general, as communicated through Italians to Europe, can be explained by this emergence of the national Italic temperament. Political and positive; keenly sensitive to natural beauty, and gifted with a quick artistic faculty; neither persistently religious nor profoundly speculative; inclined to scepticism, but accepting the existing order with sarcastic acquiescence; ironical and humorous rather than satirical; sensuous in feeling, realistic in art, rhetorical in literature; abhorring mysticism and

<sup>3</sup> It is not quite exact, though convenient, to identify Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio severally with the religious, chivalrous and national principles of which I have been speaking. Petrarch stands midway. With Dante he shares the chivalrous, with Boccaccio the humanistic side of the national element. Though Boccaccio anticipates in his work the literature of the Renaissance, yet Petrarch was certainly not less influential as an authority in style. Ariosto represents the fusion of both sections of the national element in literature—Italian as distinguished from Tuscan.

ill-fashioned for romantic exaltation; worldly, with a broad and genial toleration; refined in taste and social conduct, but violent in the indulgence of personal proclivities; born old in contrast with the youth of the Teutonic races; educated by long experience to expect a morrow differing in no essentials from to-day or yesterday; demanding, therefore, from the moment all that it can yield of satisfaction to the passions—the Italians, thus constituted, in their vigorous reaction against the middle ages, secularised the Papacy, absorbed the Paganism of the classics, substituted an æsthetic for an ethical ideal, democratised society, and opened new horizons for pioneering energy in all the fields of knowledge. The growth of their intelligence was precocious and foredoomed to a sudden check; nor was it to be expected that their solutions of the deepest problems should satisfy races of a different fibre and a posterity educated on the scientific methods of investigation. Unexpected factors were added to the general calculation by the German Reformation and the political struggles which preceded the French Revolution. Yet the influence of this Italian temperament, in forming and preparing the necessary intellectual medium in modern Europe, can hardly be exaggerated.

When the Italian genius manifested itself in art, in letters and in scholarship, national unity was already an impossibility.<sup>4</sup> The race had been broken up into republics and tyrannies. Their political forces were centrifugal rather than centripetal. The first half of the fifteenth century was the period when their division into five great powers, held together by the frail bond of diplomacy, had been accomplished, and when Italy was further distracted by the ambition of unprincipled *condottieri*. Under these conditions of dismemberment, the Renaissance came to perfection, and the ideal unity of the Italians was achieved. The space of forty years' tranquillity and equilibrium, which preceded Charles VIII.'s invasion, marked an epoch of recombination and consolidation, when the two currents of national energy, learned and popular, met to form the culture of the golden age. After being Tuscan and neo-Latin, the literature which expressed the nation now became Italian. Such is the importance of the *Quattrocento* in Italian history—long denied, late recognised, but now at length acknowledged as necessary and decisive for both Italy and Europe.

In the present chapter I propose to follow the transition from the middle ages effected by writers who, though they used the mother-tongue, take rank among cultivated authors. The two succeeding chapters will be devoted to the more obscure branches of vernacular literature which flourished among the people.

Franco Sacchetti, who uttered the funeral dirge of the fourteenth century, was also the last considerable writer of that age.<sup>5</sup> Born about the year 1335 of one of the old noble families of Florence, he lived until

<sup>4</sup> See *Age of the Despots*, chap. ii.

<sup>5</sup> See above, p. 917. All that is known about Sacchetti's life may be found in the Discourse of Monsignor Giov. Bottari, prefixed to Silvestri's edition of the *Novelle*.

the end of the century, employed in various public duties and assiduous in his pursuit of letters.<sup>6</sup> He was a friend of Boccaccio, and felt the highest admiration not only for his novels but also for his learning, though he tells us in the preface to his own three hundred tales that he was himself a man of slender erudition—*uomo discolo e grosso*.<sup>7</sup> From this preface we also learn that enthusiasm for the 'Decameron' prompted him to write a set of novels on his own account.<sup>8</sup> Though Sacchetti loved and worshipped Boccaccio, he did not imitate his style. The *Novelle* are composed in the purest vernacular, without literary artifice or rhetorical ornament. They boast no framework of fiction, like that which lends the setting of romance to the 'Decameron,' nor do they pretend to be more than short anecdotes with here and there a word of moralising from the author. Yet the student of Italian, eager to know what speech was current in the streets of Florence during the last half of that century, will value Sacchetti's idiomatic language even more highly than Boccaccio's artful periods. He tells us what the people thought and felt, in phrases borrowed from their common talk. The majority of the novels treat of Florentine life, while some of them bring illustrious Florentines—Dante and Giotto and Guido Cavalcanti—on the scene. Sacchetti's preface vouches for the truth of his stories; but, whether they be strictly accurate or not, we need not doubt their fidelity to contemporary customs, domestic manners, and daily conversation. Sacchetti inspires a certain confidence, a certain feeling of friendliness. And yet what a world is revealed in his *Novelle*—a world without tenderness, pathos, high principle, passion, or enthusiasm—men and women delighting in coarse humour, in practical jokes of inconceivable vulgarity, in language of undisguised grossness, in cruelty, fraud, violence, incontinence! The point is almost always some clever trick, a *burla* or a *beffa*, or a piece of subtly planned retaliation. Knaves and fools are the chief actors in this comic theatre; and among the former we find many friars, among the latter many husbands. To accept the *Novelle* as adequate in every detail to the facts of Florentine society, would be uncritical. They must chiefly be used for showing what passed for fun among the burghers, and what seemed fit and decent topics for discussion. Studied from that point of view, and also for the abundant light they throw on customs and fashions, Sacchetti's tales are highly valuable. The *bourgeoisie* of Florence lives again in their animated pages. We have in them a literature written to amuse, if not precisely to represent, a civic society closely packed within a narrow area, witty and pleasure-loving, acutely sensitive to the ridiculous, with strongly defined tastes and a decided preference for pungent flavours. One distinctive Florentine quality emerges with great clear-

<sup>6</sup> For Sacchetti's conception of a citizen's duty, proving him a son of Italy's heroic age, see the sonnet *Amar la patria*, in Monsignor Bottari's Discourse above mentioned.

<sup>7</sup> See the sonnet *Pien di quell' acqua* written to Boccaccio on his entering the Certosa at Naples.

<sup>8</sup> Here too he mentions a translation of the *Decameron* into English.

ness. That is a malicious and jibing humour—the malice Dante took with him to the ‘Inferno;’ the malice expressed by Il Lasca and Firenzuola, epitomised in Florentine nicknames, and condensed in Rabelaisian anecdotes which have become classical. It reaches its climax in the cruel but laughter-moving jest played by Brunelleschi on the unfortunate cabinet-maker, which has been transmitted to us in the novel of ‘Il Grasso, Legnaiuolo.’

Somewhat later than Sacchetti’s *Novelle*, appeared another collection of more or less veracious anecdotes, compiled by a certain Ser Giovanni.<sup>9</sup> He called it ‘Il Pecorone,’ which may be interpreted ‘The Simpleton:’

Ed è per nome il Pecoron chiamato,  
Perchè ci ha dentro novi barbagianni;  
Ed io son capo di cotal brigata,  
E vo belando come pecorone,  
Facendo libri, e non ne so boccata.

Nothing is known about Ser Giovanni, except what he tells us in the sonnet just quoted. From it we learn that he began his *Novelle* in the year 1378—the year of the Ciompi Revolution at Florence. As a framework for his stories, he devised a frigid romance, which may be briefly told. Sister Saturnina, the prioress of a convent at Forlì, was so wise and beautiful that her fame reached Florence, where a handsome and learned youth, named Auretto, fell in love with her by hearsay. He took orders, journeyed across the Apennines, and contrived to be appointed chaplain to Saturnina’s nuns. In due course of time she discreetly returned his affection, and, managing their affairs with prudence and decorum, they met for private converse and mutual solace in a parlour of the convent. Here they whiled away the hours by telling stories—entertaining, instructive, or romantic. The collection is divided into twenty-five days; and since each lover tells a tale, there are fifty *Novelle*, interspersed with songs after the fashion of Boccaccio. In the style, no less than in the method of the book, Ser Giovanni shows himself a closer follower of the ‘Decameron’ than Sacchetti. His novels have a wide range of incidents, embracing tragic and pathetic motives no less than what is humorous. They are treated rhetorically, and, instead of being simple anecdotes, aim at the varied movement of a drama. The language, too, is literary, and less idiomatic than Sacchetti’s. Antiquarians will find in some of these discourses an interest separate from what is common to works of fiction. They represent how history was communicated to the people of that day. Saturnina, for example, relates the myth of Troy and the foundation of Fiesole, which, as Dante tells us, the Tuscan mothers of Cacciaguada’s age sang to their children.

<sup>9</sup> This should also be the place to mention the *Novelle* of Giovanni Sercambi of Lucca. They have lately been re-edited by Professor d’ Ancona, Bologna, Romagnoli, 1871. They are short tales, historical and moral, drawn from miscellaneous mediæval sources, and resembling the *Novellino* in type. Two of them (*Novelle* ix. and x., *ed. cit.*, pp. 62-74) are interesting as forming part of the Legend of Dante the Poet.



The lives of the Countess Matilda and Frederick Barbarossa, the antiquity and wealth of the Tuscan cities, the tragedy of Corso Donati, Giano della Bella's exile, the Angevine Conquest of Sicily, the origin of Guelfs and Ghibellines in Italy, Attila's apocryphal siege of Florence, supply materials for narratives in which the true type of the *Novella* disappears. Yet Ser Giovanni mingles more amusing stories with these lectures;<sup>10</sup> and the historical dissertations are managed with such grace, with so golden a simplicity of style, that they are readable. Of a truth it is comic to think of the enamoured monk and nun meeting in the solitude of their parlour to exchange opinions upon Italian history. Though he had the good qualities of a *trecentisto* prosaist, Ser Giovanni was in this respect but a poor artist.

Both Sacchetti and Ser Giovanni were poets of no mean ability. As in his prose, so also in his 'Canzoni a Ballo,' the author of the 'Pecorone' followed Boccaccio, without, however, attaining to that glow and sensuous abandonment which render the lyrics no less enchanting than the narratives of the 'Decameron.' His style is smooth and fluent, suggesting literary culture rather than spontaneous inspiration.<sup>11</sup> Yet it is always lucid. Through the transparent language we see straight into the hearts of lovers as the novelist of Florence understood them. Written for the most part in the seven-lined stanza with recurring couplet, which Guido Cavalcanti first made fashionable, these *Ballate* give lyrical expression to a great variety of tender situations. The emotion of first love, the pains and pleasures of a growing passion, the anguish of betrayal, regrets, quarrels, reconciliations, are successively treated. In short, Ser Giovanni versified and set to music all the principal motives upon which the *Novella* of feeling turned, and formed an *ars amandi* adapted to the use of the people. In this sense his poems seem to have been accepted, for we find MSS. of the *Ballate* detached from the prose of 'Il Pecorone.'<sup>12</sup> Among the most striking may be mentioned the canzonet 'Tradita sono,' which retrospectively describes the joy of a girl in her first love; another on the fashions of Florentine ladies, 'Quante leggiadre;' and the lamentation of a woman whose lover has abandoned her, and who sees no prospect but the cloister—'Oï me lassa.'<sup>13</sup>

Ser Giovanni's lyrics are echoes of the city, where maidens danced their rounds upon the piazza in May evenings, and young men courted the beauty of the hour with songs and visits to her chamber:

<sup>10</sup> For example, the first Novel of the fourth day is the story which Shakspeare dramatised in *The Merchant of Venice*, and forms, as everyone can see, the authentic source of that comedy.

<sup>11</sup> It must be remarked that the text of *Il Pecorone* underwent Domenichi's revision in the sixteenth century, which may account for a certain flatness.

<sup>12</sup> See Carducci, *Canzilene e Ballate, Strambotti e Madrigali nei Secoli xiii e xiv*, Pisa, Nistri, 1871. Pp. 176-205 contain a reprint of these lyrics. Carducci's work *Intorno ad alcune Rime*, Imola, 1876, may be consulted at pp. 54 *et seq.* for the origin, wide diffusion, and several species of the popular dance-song.

<sup>13</sup> *Canzilene*, &c. pp. 199, 196, 204.



Con quanti dolci suon e con che canti  
 Io era visitata tutto 'l giorno!  
 E nella zambra venivan gli amanti,  
 Facendo festa e standomi intorno:  
 Ed io guardava nel bel viso adorno,  
 Che d' allegrezza mi cresceva il core.

Franco Sacchetti carries us to somewhat different scenes. The best of his madrigals and canzonets describe the pleasures of country life. They are not genuinely rustic; nor do they, in Theocritean fashion, attempt to render the beauty of the country from the peasant's point of view. On the contrary, they owe their fascination to the contrast between the simplicity of the villa and the unrest of the town, where:

Mal vi si dice e di ben far vi è caro.

They are written for and by the *bourgeois* who has escaped from shops and squares and gossiping street-corners. The keynote of this poetry, which has always something of the French *école buissonnière* in its fresh unalloyed enjoyment, is struck in a song describing the return of Spring:<sup>14</sup>

Benedetta sia la state  
 Che ci fa sì solazzare!  
 Maladetto sia lo verno  
 Che a città ci fa tornare!

The poet summons his company of careless folk, on pleasure bent:

No' siam una compagnia,  
 I' dico di cacciapiensieri.

He takes them forth into the fields among the farms and olive-gardens, bidding them leave prudence and grave thoughts within the lofty walls of Florence town:

Il senno e la contenenza  
 Lasciam dentro all' alte mura  
 Della città di Fiorenza.

This note of gaiety and pure enjoyment is sustained throughout his lyrics. In one *Ballata* he describes a country girl, caught by thorns, and unable to avoid her admirer's glance.<sup>15</sup> Another gives a pretty picture of a maiden with a wreath of olive-leaves and silver.<sup>16</sup> A third is a little idyll of two girls talking to their lambs, and followed by an envious old woman.<sup>17</sup> A fourth is a biting satire on old women—'Di diavol vecchia femmina ha natura.'<sup>18</sup> A fifth is that incomparably graceful canzonet, 'O vaghe montanine pasturelle,' the popularity of which is proved by the fact that it was orally transmitted for many generations, and attributed in after days to both Lorenzo de' Medici

<sup>14</sup> *Cantilene*, &c. p. 211.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* p. 220.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* p. 219. Compare *Passando con pensier* in the *Rime di Messer Cino e d' altri* (Barbèra), p. 563.

<sup>17</sup> *Cantilene*, &c. p. 233.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* p. 231.

and Angelo Poliziano.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, it may be said in passing that Poliziano owed much to Sacchetti. This can be seen by comparing Sacchetti's *Ballata* on the Gentle Heart, and his pastoral of the Thorn-tree with the later poet's lyrics.<sup>20</sup>

The unexpressed contrast between the cautious town-life of the burgher poet and his license in the villa, to which I have already called attention, determines the character of many minor lyrics by Sacchetti.<sup>21</sup> We comprehend the spirit of these curious poems, at once popular and fashionable, when we compare them with mediæval French *Pastourelles*, or with similar compositions by wandering Latin students. In the 'Carmina Burana' may be found several little poems, describing the fugitive loves of truant scholars with rustic girls, which prove that, long before Sacchetti's age, the town had sought spring-solace in the country.<sup>22</sup> Men are too apt to fancy that what they consider the refinements of passion and fashion (the finer edge, for example, put upon desire by altering its object from the known and trivial to the untried and exceptional, from venal beauties in the city to shepherd maidens on the village-green) are inventions of their own times. Yet it was precisely a refinement of this sort which gave peculiar flavour to Sacchetti's songs in the fourteenth century, and which made them sought after. They had great vogue in Italy, enjoying the privilege of popularity among the working classes, and helping to diffuse that sort of pastoral part-song which we still know as Madrigal.<sup>23</sup> Sacchetti was himself a good musician; many of his songs were set to music by himself, and others by his friends. This gives a pleasant old-world homeliness to the Latin titles inscribed beneath the rubrics—'Franciscus de Organis sonum dedit,' 'Intonatum per Francum Sacchetti,' 'Francus sonum dedit,' and so forth.

The Ballads and Madrigals of Niccolò Soldanieri should be mentioned in connection with Sacchetti; though they do not detach themselves in any marked way from the style of love-poetry practised at the close of the fourteenth century.<sup>24</sup> The case is different with Alesso Donati's lyrics. In them we are struck by a new gust of coarse and powerful realism, which has no parallel among the elder poets except in the savage sonnets of Cecco Angiolieri. Vividly natural situations are here detached from daily life and delineated with intensity of passion, vehement sincerity. Sacchetti's gentleness and genial humour have disappeared. In their place we find a dramatic energy and a truth of lan-

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* p. 214 and note. The popularity of this dance-poem is further proved by a pious parody written to be sung to the same air with it: 'O vaghe di Gesù, o verginelle.' See *Laudi Spirituali* (Firenze, Molini, 1863), p. 105.

<sup>20</sup> *Cantilene*, &c. pp. 218, 217.

<sup>21</sup> See *ibid.* pp. 252-256, 259, 263.

<sup>22</sup> It is enough to mention *Exit diluculo, Vere dulci mediante, Æstivali sub fervore*.

<sup>23</sup> I must briefly refer to Carducci's Essay on 'Musica e Poesia nel mondo elegante italiano del secolo xiv,' in his *Studi Letterari*, Livorno, Vigo, 1874, and to my own translations from some of the there published Madrigals in *Sketches and Studies in Italy*, pp. 214-216.

<sup>24</sup> Carducci, *Cantilene*, pp. 265-296.

guage that are almost terrible. Each of the little scenes, which I propose to quote in illustration of these remarks, might be compared to etchings bitten with aquafortis into copper. Here, for example, is a nun, who has resolved to throw aside her veil and follow her lover in a page's dress:<sup>25</sup>

La dura corda e 'l vel bruno e la tonica  
Gittar voglio e lo scapolo  
Che mi tien qui rinchiusa e fammi monica;  
Poi teco a guisa d' assetato giovane,  
Non già che si sobarcoli,  
Venir me 'n voglio ove fortuna piovane;  
E son contenta star per serva e cuoca,  
Chè men mi cocerò ch' ora mi cuoca.

Here is a dialogue at dawn between a woman and her paramour. The presence of the husband sleeping in the chamber is suggested with a brutal vigour:<sup>26</sup>

Dè vattene oggimai, ma pianamente,  
Amor; per dio, sì piano  
Che non ti senta il mal vecchio villano.  
Ch' egli sta sentecchioso, e, se pur sente  
Ch' i', die nel letto volta,  
Temendo abbraccia me no gli s'ie tola.  
Che tristo faccia Iddio chi gli m' à data  
E chi spera 'n villan buona derrata.

Scarcely less forcible is the girl's vow against her mother, who keeps her shut at home:<sup>27</sup>

In pena vivo qui sola soletta  
Giovin rinchiusa dalla madre mia,  
La qual mi guarda con gran gelosia.  
Ma io le giuro alla croce di Dio  
Che s' ella mi terrà qui più serrata,  
Ch' i' diro—Fa' con Dio, vecchia arrabiata;  
E gitterò la rocca, il fuso e l' ago,  
Amor, fuggendo a te di cui m' appago.

To translate these madrigals would be both difficult and undesirable. It is enough to have printed the original texts. They prove that aristocratic versifiers at this period were adopting the style of the people, and adding the pungency of brief poetic treatment to episodes suggested by *Novelle*.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 298.

<sup>26</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 301.

<sup>27</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 300.

<sup>28</sup> It may be worth mentioning that Soldanieri and Donati as well as Sacchetti belonged to the old nobility of Florence, the Grandi celebrated by name in Dante's *Paradiso*.

While dealing with the *Novelle* and the semi-popular literature of this transition period, I have hitherto neglected those numerous minor poets who continued the traditions of the earlier *Trecento*.<sup>29</sup> There are two main reasons for this preference. In the first place, the *Novella* was destined to play a most important part in the history of the Renaissance, imposing its own laws of composition upon species so remote as the religious drama and romantic epic. In the second place, the dance-songs, canzonets and madrigals of Sacchetti's epoch lived upon the lips of the common folk, who during the fifteenth century carried Italian literature onward through a subterranean channel.<sup>30</sup> When vernacular poetry reappeared into the light of erudition and the Courts, the influences of that popular style, which drew its origin from Boccaccio and Sacchetti rather than from Dante or the *Trovatori*, determined the manner of Lorenzo de' Medici and Poliziano. Meanwhile the learned poems of the latest *trecentisti* were forgotten with the lumber of the middle ages. For the special purpose, therefore, of this volume, which only regards the earlier stages of Italian literature in so far as they preceded and conditioned the Renaissance, it was necessary to give the post of honour to Boccaccio's followers. Some mention should, however, here be made of those contemporaries and imitators of Petrarch, in whom the traditions of the fourteenth century expired. It is not needful to pass in review the many versifiers who treated the old themes of chivalrous love with meritorious conventional facility. The true life of the Italians was not here; and the phase of literature which the Sicilian School inaugurated, survived already as an anachronism. The case is different with such poetry as dealt immediately with contemporary politics. In the declamatory compositions of this age, we hear the echoes of the Guelph and Ghibelline wars. The force of that great struggle was already spent; but for the partisans of either faction passion enough survived to furnish genuine inspiration. Fazio degli Uberti's *sermintese* on the cities of Italy, for example, was written in the bitter spirit of an exiled Ghibelline.<sup>31</sup> His ode to Charles IV. is a torrent of vehement mediæval abuse, poured forth against an Emperor who had shown himself unworthy of his place in Italy:<sup>32</sup>

Sappi ch' i' son Italia che ti parlo,  
Di Lusimburgo ignominioso Carlo!

After detailing the woes which have befallen her in consequence of her

<sup>29</sup> See Trucchi's *Poesie Inedite*, and the *Rime Antiche Toscane*, cited above, for copious collections of these poets.

<sup>30</sup> This can be seen in Carducci's *Cantilene*, pp. 115, 116, 150, and in his *Studi Letterari*, pp. 374-446.

<sup>31</sup> *O pellegrina Italia. Rime di Cino e d' altri* (Barbèra), p. 318. I shall quote from this excellent edition of Carducci, as being most accessible to general readers. The *Sermintese* or *Serventese*, it may be parenthetically said, was a form of satirical and occasional lyric adapted from the Provençal *Servente*.

<sup>32</sup> *Cino, &c.* p. 342.

abandonment by the imperial master, Italy addresses herself to God:

Tu dunque, Giove, perchè 'l santo uccello . . .  
Da questo Carlo quarto  
Imperador non togli e dalle mani  
Degli altri lurchi moderni germani  
Che d' aquila un allocco n' hanno fatto?

The Italian Ghibellines had, indeed, good reason to complain that German gluttons, Cæsars in nought but name, who only thought of making money by their sale of fiefs and honours, had changed the eagle of the Empire into an obscene night-flying bird of prey. The same spirit is breathed in Fazio's ode on Rome.<sup>33</sup> He portrays the former mistress of the world as a lady clad in weeds of mourning, 'ancient, august and honourable, but poor and needy as her habit showed, prudent in speech and of great puissance.' She bids the poet rouse his fellow-countrymen from their sleep of sloth and drunkenness, to reassert the majesty of the empire owed to Italy and Rome:

O figliuol mio, da quanta crudel guerra  
Tutti insieme verremo a dolce pace,  
Se Italia soggiace  
A un solo Re che al mio voler consente!

This is the last echo of the 'De Monarchiâ.' The great imperial idea, so destructive to Italian confederation, so dazzling to patriots of Dante's fibre, expires amid the wailings of minstrels who cry for the impossible, and haunt the Courts of petty Lombard princes.

In another set of *Canzoni* we listen to Guelf and Ghibelline recriminations, rising from the burghs of Tuscany. The hero of these poems is Gian Galeazzo Visconti, rightly recognised by the Guelfs of Florence as a venomous and selfish tyrant, foolishly belauded by the Ghibellines of Siena as the vindicator of imperial principles. The Emperors have abandoned Italy; the Popes are at Avignon. The factions which their quarrels generated, agitate their people still, but on a narrower basis. Sacchetti slings invectives against the *maladetta serpe, aspro tiranno con amaro fele*, who shall be throttled by the Church and Florence, leagued to crush the Lombard despots.<sup>34</sup> Saviozzo da Siena addresses the same Visconti as *novella monarchia, giusto signore, clemente padre, insigne, virtuoso*. By his means the *dolce vedovella*; Rome or Italy, shall at last find peace.<sup>35</sup> This Duke of Milan, it will be remembered, had already ordered the crown of Italy from his Court-jeweller, and was advancing on his road of conquest, barred only by Florence, when the Plague cut short his career in 1402. The poet of Siena exhorts him to take courage

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* p. 334.

<sup>34</sup> *Cino, &c.* p. 548.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.* p. 586.

for his task, in lines that are not deficient in a certain fire of inspiration:

Tu vedi in ciel la fiammeggiante aurora,  
Le stelle tue propizie e rutilanti,  
E' segni tutti quanti  
Ora disposti alla tua degna spada.

In another strophe he refers to the Italian crown:

Ecco qui Italia che ti chiama padre,  
Che per te spera omai di trionfare,  
E di sè incoronare  
Le tue benigne e preziose chiome.

An anonymous sonneteer of the same period uses similar language:<sup>36</sup>

Roma vi chiama—Cesar mio novello.  
I' son ignuda, e l' anima pur vive;  
Or mi coprite col vostro mantello.

The Ghibelline poets, whether they dreamed like Fazio of Roman Empire, or flattered the Visconti with a crown to be won by triumph over the detested Guefts, made play with Dante's memory. Some of the most interesting lyrics of the school are elegies upon his death. To this class belong two sonnets by Pieraccio Tedaldi and Muccio da Lucca.<sup>37</sup> Nor must Boccaccio's noble pair of sonnets, although he was not a political poet, be here forgotten.<sup>38</sup> That Dante was diligently studied can be seen, not only in the diction of this epoch, but also in numerus versified commentaries upon the 'Divine Comedy'—in the *terza rima* abstracts of Boson da Gubbio, Jacopo Alighieri, Saviozzo da Siena, and Boccaccio.<sup>39</sup>

Tuscan politics are treated from the Guelf point of view in Sacchetti's odes upon the war with Pisa, upon the government of Florence after 1378, and against the cowardice of the Italians.<sup>40</sup> His conception of a burgher's duties, the ideal of Guelf *bourgeoisie* before Florence had become accustomed to tyrants, finds expression in a sonnet—'Amar la patria.'<sup>41</sup> We frequently meet with the word *Comune* on his lips:

O vuol rè o signore o vuol comune,  
Chè per comune dico ciò ch' io parlo.

A like note of municipal independence is sounded in the poems of An-

<sup>36</sup> *Cino, &c.* p. 391.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 199, 200.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 384, 389.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 202, 211, 573, 390.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 504, 535, 498.

<sup>41</sup> In the Discourse of Monsignor Giov. Bottari, Section vi., printed before Sacchetti's *Novelle*.

tonio Pucci, and in the admonitory stanzas of Matteo Frescobaldi.<sup>42</sup> Considerable interest attaches to these political compositions for the light they throw on party feeling at the close of the heroic age of Italian history. The fury with which those factions raged prompts the bards of either camp to curses. I may refer to this passage from Folgore da San Gemignano, when he sees the Ghibelline Uguccone triumphant over Tuscany:<sup>43</sup>

Io non ti lodo Dio e non ti adoro,  
 E non ti prego e non ti ringrazio,  
 E non ti servo ch' io ne son più sazio  
 Che l' aneme de star en purgatorio;  
 Perchè tu ai messi i Guelfi a tal martoro  
 Ch' i Ghibellini ne fan beffe e strazio,  
 E se Uguccon ti comandasse il dazio,  
 Tu 'l pagaresti senza preemptoro!

Yet neither in the confused idealism of the Ghibellines nor in the honest independence of the Guelfs lay the true principle of national progress. Sinking gradually and inevitably beneath the sway of despots, the Italians in the fifteenth century were destined to become a nation of scholars, artists, *litterati*. The age of Dante, the uncompromising aristocrat, was over. The age of Boccaccio, the easy-going *bourgeois*, had begun. The future glories of Italy were to be won in the field of culture; and all the hortatory lyrics I have mentioned, exerted but little influence over the development of a spirit which was growing quietly within the precincts of the people. The Italian people at this epoch cared far less for the worn-out factions of the Guelfs and Ghibellines than for home-comforts and tranquillity in burgher occupations. The keener intellects of the fifteenth century were already so absorbingly occupied with art and classical studies that there was no room left in them for politics of the old revolutionary type. Meanwhile the new intrigues of Cabinets and Courts were left to a class of humanistic diplomatists, created by the conditions of despotic government. Scarcely less ineffectual were the moral verses of Bambagioli and Cavalca, or the Petrarchistic imitations of Marchionne Torrigiani, Federigo d' Arezzo, Coluccio Salutati, Roberto di Battifolle, and Bonaccorso da Montemagno.<sup>44</sup> The former belonged to a phase of mediæval culture which was waning. The elegant but lifeless Petrarchistic school dragged on through the fifteenth century, culminating in the 'Canzoniere' of Giusto de' Conti, a Roman, which was called 'La bella mano.' The revival of their mannerism, with a fixed artistic motive, by Bembo and the purists of the sixteenth century, will form part of my later history of Renaissance literature.

<sup>42</sup> *Cino*, &c. pp. 445-474, 258-263.

<sup>43</sup> Navone's edition (Bologna, Romagnoli, 1880), p. 56. The date of this sonnet must be about 1315. We have to choose between placing Folgore in that century or assigning the sonnet to some anonymous author. See Appendix ii. for translations.

<sup>44</sup> *Cino*, &c. pp. 174-195, 420-441.



One note is unmistakable in all the poetry of these last *trecentisti*. It is a note of profound discouragement, mistrust, and disappointment. We have already heard it sounded by Sacchetti in his lament for Boccaccio. Boccaccio had raised it himself in two noble sonnets—'Apizio legge' and 'Fuggit' è ogni virtù'.<sup>45</sup> It takes the shrillness of a threnody in Tedaldi's 'Il mondo vile' and in Manfredi di Boccaccio's 'Amico il mondo'.<sup>46</sup> The poets of that age were dimly conscious that a new era had opened for their country—an era of money-getting, despotism, and domestic ease. They saw the people used to servitude and sunk in common pleasures—dead to the high aims and imaginative aspirations of the past. The turbulence of the heroic age was gone. The men of the present were all *Vigliacchi*. And as yet both art and learning were but in their cradle. It was impossible upon the opening of the fifteenth century, in that crepuscular interval between two periods of splendour, to know what glories for Italy and for the world at large would be produced by Giotto's mighty lineage and Petrarch's progeny of scholars. We who possess in history the vision of that future can be content to wait through a transition century. The men of the moment not unnaturally expressed the querulousness of Italy, distracted by her struggles of the past and sinking into somnolence. Cosimo de' Medici, the moulder of Renaissance Florence, was already born in 1389; and men of Cosimo's stamp were no heroes for poets who had felt the passions that moved Dante.

The 'Divine Comedy' found fewer imitators than the 'Canzoniere'; for who could bend the bow of Ulysses? Yet some poets of the transition were hardy enough to attempt the Dantesque metre, and to pretend in a prosaic age that they had shared the vision of the prophets. Among these should be mentioned Fazio degli Uberti, a scion of Farinata's noble house, who lived and travelled much in exile.<sup>47</sup> Taking Solinus, the antique geographer, for his guide, Fazio produced a topographical poem called the 'Dicta Mundi' or 'Dittamondo'.<sup>48</sup>

From the prosaic matter of this poem, which resembles a very primitive *Mappamondo*, illustrated with interludes of history and excursions into mythological zoology, based upon the text of Pliny, and not unworthy of Mandeville, two episodes emerge and arrest attention. One is the description of Rome—a sombre lady in torn raiment, who tells the history of her eventful past, describes her triumphs and her empire, and points to the ruins on her seven crowned hills to show how beautiful she was in youth.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* p. 418.

<sup>46</sup> *Cino, &c.* pp. 197, 198.

<sup>47</sup> He was the author of the Ghibelline *Canzoni* quoted above.

<sup>48</sup> It was composed about 1360. I have seen two editions of this poem, *Opera di Faccio degli uberti Fiorentino, Chiamato Ditta Mundi, Volgare*. Impresso in Venetia per Christoforo di Pensa da Mondelo. Adi iiii. Setembrio MCCCCCI. The second is a version modernised in its orthography: *Il Dittamondo*, Milano, Silvestri, 1826. My quotations will be made from the second of these editions, which has the advantage of a more intelligible text.

<sup>49</sup> Lib. i. cap. 2. Cp. Fazio's Ode on Rome, above, p. 929.

Ivi una dama scorsi;  
 Vecchia era in vista, e trista per costume.  
 Gli occhi da lei, andando, mai son torsi;  
 Ma poichè presso le fui giunto tanto  
 Ch' io l' avvisava senza nessun forsi,  
 Vidi il suo volto, ch' era pien di pianto,  
 Vidi la vesta sua rotta e disfatta,  
 E roso e guasto il suo vedovo manto.  
 E con tutto che fosse così fatta,  
 Pur nell' abito suo onesto e degno  
 Mostrava uscita di gentile schiatta.  
 Tanto era grande, e di nobil contegno,  
 Ch' io diceva fra me: Ben fu costei,  
 E pare ancor da posseder bel regno.

Fazio addresses the mighty shadow with respectful sympathy. Rome answers in language which is noble through its simple dignity:

Non ti maravigliare s' io ho doglia,  
 Non ti maravigliar se trista piango,  
 Nè se me vedi in sì misera spoglia;  
 Ma fatti maraviglia, ch' io rimango,  
 E non divento qual divenne Ecuba  
 Quando gittava altrui le pietre e il fango.

The second passage of importance, more noticeable for a sense of space and largeness than for its poetical expression, is a description of the prospect seen from Alvernia, that high station of the 'topless Apennines,' where S. Francis took the Stigmata, and where Dante sought a home in the destruction of his earthly hopes:<sup>50</sup>

Noi fummo sopra il sasso dell' Alverna  
 Al faggio ove Francesco fue fedito  
 Dal Serafin quel di ch' ei più s' interna.  
 Molto è quel monte devoto e romito,  
 Ed è sì alto che il più di Toscana  
 Mi disegnò un frate col suo dito.  
 Guarda, mi disse, al mare, e vedi piana  
 Con altri colli la maremma tutta  
 Dilettevole molto e poco sana.  
 Ivi è Massa, Grosseto e la distrutta  
 Città vecchia, ed ivi Populonia  
 Ch' appena pare, tanto è mal condotta.

The whole of Tuscany and Umbria, their cities, plains, rivers and mountain summits, are unrolled; and the friar concludes with a sentence which well embodies the feeling we have in gazing over an illimitable landscape:

Io so bene che quanto t' ho mostrato,  
 La vista nol discerna apertamente,  
 Per lo spazio ch' è lungo dov' io guato:  
 Ma quando l' uom che bene ascolta e sente,  
 Ode parlar di cosa che non vede,  
 Immagina con l' occhio della mente.

<sup>50</sup> Lib. iii. cap. 9.

Such value as the 'Dittamondo' may still retain for students, it owes partly to the author's enthusiasm for ancient Rome, and partly to the sympathy with nature he had acquired during his wandering as an exile over the sacred soil of Italy.

Another poem of Dantesque derivation was the 'Quadriregio' of Federigo Frezzi, Bishop of Foligno.<sup>51</sup> It is an allegorical account of human life; and the four regions, which give their name to the book, are the realms of Love, Satan, Vice and Virtue.<sup>52</sup> To cast the moralisations of the middle ages in a form imitated from Dante, after Dante had already condensed the ethics and politics, the theology and science of his century in the 'Divine Comedy,' was little less than a hopeless task. Nor need a word be spent upon the 'Quadriregio,' except by way of illustrating the peculiar conditions of the poetic art, here upon the borderland between the middle age and the Renaissance. Federigo Frezzi was intent on depicting the victories of virtue over vice, and on explaining the advantage offered to the Christian by grace. Yet he chose a mythological framework for his doctrine. Cupid, Venus and Minerva are confused with Satan, Enoch and Elijah. Instead of Eden there is the golden age. Nymphs of Diana, Juno, and the like, are used as emblems. Pallas discourses about Christ, and expounds the Christian system of redemption. The earthly Paradise contains Helicon, with all the antique poets. Jupiter is contrasted with Satan. It is the same blending of antique with Christian motives which we note in the 'Divine Comedy,' but the tact of the great artist is absent, and the fusion becomes grotesque. After reading through the poem we lay it down with the same feeling as that produced in us by studying some pulpit of the Pisan School, where a Gothic Devil, all horns and hoofs and grinning jaws, squats cheek by jowl with a Madonna copied from a Roman tomb. The following description of Cupid recalls the manner of the Sienese *frescanti*:<sup>53</sup>

Appena questo priego havea io decto  
quando egli apparve ad me fresco et giocondo  
in un giardino ove io stava solecto.  
Di mirto coronato il capo biondo  
in forma pueril con sì bel viso  
che mai piu bel fu visto in questo mondo.  
Creso haverai che su del paradiso  
fusse el suo aspecto, tanto era sovrano,  
se non che quando a lui mirai fiso  
Vidi che haveva uno archio orato in mano  
col quale Achille et Hercole percosse.

<sup>51</sup> *Libro chiamato Quadriregio del Decorso de la Vita Humana in Terza Rima*, Impresso in Venetia del MCCCCCXI a di primo di Decembrio. There is, I believe, a last century Foligno reprint of the *Quadriregio*; but I have not seen it.

<sup>52</sup> 'Regno di Dio Cupido,' 'Regno di Sathan,' 'Regno delli Vitii,' 'Regno della Dea Minerva e di Virtù.'

<sup>53</sup> Lib. i. cap. i.

Here is a picture of the Golden Age, transcribed from Latin poetry, much as it was destined to control the future of Italian fancy:<sup>54</sup>

Vergine saggia e bella el ciel adorna  
 di cui Virgilio poetando scripse,  
 nuova progenie al mondo dal ciel torna,  
 Rexe già el mondo et si la gente visse  
 socto lei in pace che la età dell' oro  
 et seculo giusto et beato si disse.  
 La terra allora senza alcun lavoro  
 dava li fructi, et non faceva spine,  
 ne ancho al giogo si domava el thoro;  
 Non erano divisi per confine  
 anchora i campi, et nesun per guadagno  
 cercava le contrade pelegrine;  
 Ognuno era fratello, ognun compagno,  
 et era tanto amor, tanta petade,  
 che ad un fonte bevea el lupo et l' agno;  
 Non eran lencie, non erano spade,  
 non era anchor la pecunia peggiore  
 che 'l guerigiante ferro piu si fiade;  
 La invidia allor vedendo tanto amore  
 di questo bene ad se genero pene  
 e desto gaudio ad se diede dolore.

A little while beyond this foretaste of the *cinque cento*, we find Charon copied, without addition, but with a fatal loss of poetry, from the 'Inferno':<sup>55</sup>

Vidi Caron non molto da lontano  
 con una nave in mezo la tempesta,  
 che conducea con un gran remo in mano:  
 Et ciaschuno occhio chelli havea in testa,  
 pareva come di nocte una lumiera,  
 o un falo quando si fa per festa.  
 Quando egli fu appresso alla riviera  
 un mezo miglio quasi o poco mancho,  
 scacci sua faccia grande vizza e nera.  
 Egli havea el capo di canuti biancho,  
 el manto adosso rapezato et uncto,  
 el volto sì crudel non vidi un quancho.

Last upon the list of Dantesque imitators stands Matteo Palmieri, a learned Florentine, who composed his 'Città di Vita' in the middle of the fifteenth century. This poem won for its author from Marsilio Ficino the title of 'Poeta Theologicus'.<sup>56</sup> Its chief interest at the present time is that the theology expressed in it brought suspicion of heresy on Palmieri. He held Origen's opinion that the souls of men were rebel

<sup>54</sup> Lib. ii. cap. 2.

<sup>55</sup> Lib. ii. cap. 7.

<sup>56</sup> See *Ficini Epistolæ*, 1495, folio 17. Further notice of Palmieri's poem will be found in an Appendix at the end of the next section.

angels. How a doctrine of this kind could be rendered in painting is not clear. Yet Giorgio Vasari tells us that a picture executed for Matteo Palmieri by Sandro Botticelli, which represented the Assumption of the Virgin into the celestial hierarchy—Powers, Princedoms, Thrones and Dominations ranged around her in concentric circles—fell under the charge of heterodoxy. The altar in S. Pietro Maggiore where it was placed had to be interdicted, and the picture veiled from sight.<sup>57</sup> The story forms a curious link between this last scion of mediæval literature and the painting of the Renaissance. After Palmieri the metre of the 'Divine Comedy' was chiefly used for satire and burlesque. Lorenzo de' Medici adapted its grave rhythms to parody in 'I Beoni.' Berni used it for the Capitoli of the 'Pesche' and the 'Peste.' At Florence it became the recognised metre for obscene and frivolous compositions, which delighted the Academicians of the sixteenth century. The people, meanwhile, continued to employ it in *Lamenti*, historical compositions, and personal Capitoli.<sup>58</sup> Thus Cellini wrote his poem called 'I Carceri' in *terza rima*, and Giovanni Santi used it for his precious but unpoetical Chronicle of Italian affairs. Both Benivieni and Michelangelo Buonarroti composed elegies in this metre; and numerous didactic eclogues of the pastoral poets might be cited in which it served for analogue to Latin elegiacs. In the 'Sacre Rappresentazioni' it sometimes interrupted *ottava rima*, on the occasion of a set discourse or sermon.<sup>59</sup> Both Ariosto and Alamanni employed it in their satires. From these brief notices it will be seen that *terza rima* during the Renaissance period was reserved for dissertational, didactic and satiric themes, the Capitoli of the burlesque poets being parodies of grave scholastic lucubrations. But no one now attempted an heroic poem in this verse.<sup>60</sup>

To give a full account of Italian prose during this period of transition from the middle age to the Renaissance is not easy. At the close of the fourteenth century, S. Catherine of Siena sustained the purity and 'dove-like simplicity' of the earlier *Trecento* style, with more of fervour and personal power than any subsequent writer. Her letters, whether addressed to Popes and princes on the politics of Italy, or dealing with private topics of religious experience, are models of the purest Tuscan diction.<sup>61</sup> They have the garrulity and over-unctuous sweetness of the

<sup>57</sup> See Vasari (Lemonnier, 1849), vol. v. p. 115, and note. This work by Botticelli is now in England.

<sup>58</sup> I may refer curious readers to two *Lamenti* of Pre Agostino, condemned to the cage or *Chebbia* at Venice for blasphemy. They are given at length by Mutinelli, *Annali Urbani di Venezia*, pp. 352-356.

<sup>59</sup> For instance, 'Un Miracolo di S. M. Maddalena,' in D' Ancona's *Sacre Rappre.* vol. i. p. 397.

<sup>60</sup> It would be an interesting study to trace the vicissitudes of *terza rima* from the *Paradiso* of Dante, through the *Quadriregio* and *Dittamondo*, to Lorenzo de' Medici's *Beoni* and La Casa's *Capitolo del Forno*. In addition to what I have observed above, it occurs to me to mention the semi-popular *terza rima* poems in Alberti's *Accademia Coronaria* (Bonucci's edition of Alberti, vol. i. pp. clxxv *et seq.*) and Boiardo's comedy of *Timone*. Both illustrate the didactic use of the metre.

<sup>61</sup> *Le Lettere di S. Caterina da Siena*, Firenze, Barbèra, 1860. Edited and furnished with a copious commentary by Niccolò Tommaseo. Four volumes.

'Fioretti' and 'Leggende.' But these qualities, peculiar to mediæval piety among Italians, are balanced by untutored eloquence which borders on sublimity. Without deliberate art or literary aim, the spirit of a noble woman speaks from the heart in Catherine's letters. The fervour of her feeling suggests poetic imagery. The justice of her perception dictates weighty sentences. The intensity with which she realises the unseen world of spiritual emotion, gives dramatic movement to her exhortations, expositions and entreaties. These rare excellences of a style, where spontaneity surpasses artifice, are combined in the famous epistle to her confessor, Raimondo da Capua, describing the execution of Niccolò Tuldo.<sup>62</sup> He was a young man of Perugia, condemned to death for some act of insubordination. Catherine visited him in prison, and induced him to take the Sacrament with her for the first time. He besought her to be present with him at the place of execution. Accordingly she waited for him there, praying to Mary and to Catherine, the virgin saint of Alexandria, laying her own neck upon the block, and entering into harmony so rapt with those celestial presences that the multitude of men who were around her disappeared from view. What followed, must be told in her own words:

Poi egli giunse, come uno agnello mansueto; e vedendomi, cominciò a ridere; e volse che io gli facesse il segno della croce. E ricevuto il segno, dissi io: 'Giuso! alle nozze, fratello mio dolce! chè tosto sarai alla vita durabile.' Posei quì con grande mansuetudine; e io gli distesi il collo, e chinàmi giù, e rammentàli il sangue dell' Agnello. La bocca sua non diceva se non, Gesù, e, Catarina. E, così dicendo, ricevetti il capo nelle mani mie, fermando l' occhio nella divina bontà e dicendo: 'Io voglio.'

Allora si vedeva Dio-e-Uomo, come si vedesse la chiarezza del sole; e stava aperto, e riceveva il sangue; nel sangue suo uno fuoco di desiderio santo, dato e nascosto nell' anima sua per grazia; riceveva nel fuoco della divina sua carità. Poichè abbe ricevuto il sangue e il desiderio suo, ed egli ricevette l' anima sua, la quale mise nella bottiga aperta del costato suo, pieno di misericordia; manifestando la prima Verità, che per sola grazia e misericordia egli il riceveva, e non per veruna altra operazione. O-quanto era dolce e inestimabile a vedere la bontà di Dio!

The sudden transition from this narrative of fact to the vision of Christ—from the simple style of ordinary speech to ecstasy inebriated with the cross—is managed with a power that truth alone could yield. A dramatist might have conceived it; but only a saint who lived habitually in both worlds of loving service and illumination, could thus have made it natural. This is the noblest and the rarest realism.

If we trust the testimony of contemporary chroniclers, S. Bernardino of Siena in the pulpit shared Catherine's power of utterance, at once impressive and simple.<sup>63</sup> No doubt the preachers of the *quattrocento* were influential in maintaining a tradition of prose rhetoric. But it is not in the nature of sermons, even when ably reported, to preserve their fulness and their force. Not less important for the formation of a

<sup>62</sup> *Op. cit.* vol. iv. pp. 5-12.

<sup>63</sup> See, for example, the passages from Graziani's *Chronicle of Perugia*, quoted by me in Appendix IV. to *Age of the Despots*.



literary style were the letters and despatches of ambassadors. Though at this period all ceremonial orations, briefs, state documents and epistles between Courts and commonwealths were composed in Latin, still the secret correspondence of envoys with their home governments gave occasion for the use of the vernacular; and even humanists expressed their thoughts occasionally in the mother tongue. Coluccio Salutati, for example, whose Latin letters were regarded as models of epistolary style, employed Italian in less formal communications with his office. These early documents of studied Tuscan writing are now more precious than his formal Ciceronian imitations. Private letters may also be mentioned among the best sources for studying the growth of Italian prose, although we have not much material to judge by.<sup>64</sup> The correspondence of Alessandra degli Strozzi, recently edited by Signor Cesare Gausti, is not only valuable for the light it casts upon contemporary manners, but also for the illustration of the Florentine idiom as written by a woman of noble birth.<sup>65</sup> Of Poliziano's, Pulci's and Lorenzo de' Medici's letters I shall have occasion to speak in a somewhat different connexion later on.

The historiographers of the Renaissance thought it below their dignity to use any language but Latin.<sup>66</sup> At the same time, vernacular annalists abounded in Italy, whose labours were of no small value in forming the prose style of the *quattrocento*. After the Villani, Florence could boast a whole chain of writers, beginning with Marchionne Stefani, including Gino Capponi, the spirited chronicler of the Ciompi rebellion, and extending to Goro Dati in the middle of the fifteenth century. A little later, Giovanni Cavalcanti, in his Florentine Histories, proved how the simple diction of the preceding age was being spoiled by false classicism.<sup>67</sup> This work is doubly valuable—both as a record of the great Albizzi oligarchy and their final conquest by the Medici, and also as a monument of the fusion which was being made between the popular and humanistic styles. The chronicles of other Italian cities—Ferrara, Cremona, Rome, Pisa, Bologna, and even Siena—show less purity of language than the Florentine.<sup>68</sup> Italian is often mixed with vulgar Latin, and phrases borrowed from unpolished local dialects abound. It was not until the close of the century that two great writers of history in the vernacular arose outside the walls of Florence. These were Corio, the historian of Milan, and Matarazzo, the annalist of Perugia.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>64</sup> See *Alcune Lettere familiari del Sec. xiv*, Bologna, Romagnoli, 1868. This collection contains letters by Lemmo Balducci (1333-1389), Filippo dell' Antella (circa 1398), Dora del Bene, Lanfredino Lanfredini (born about 1345), Coluccio Salutati (1330-1406), Giorgio Scali (died 1381), and Marchionne Stefani (died 1385).

<sup>65</sup> Alessandra Macinghi negli Strozzi, *Lettere di una Gentildonna Fiorentina del secolo xv*, Firenze, Sansoni, 1877.

<sup>66</sup> See *Revival of Learning*, chap. 4, and *Age of the Despots*, chap. 5.

<sup>67</sup> *Istorie Fiorentine scritte da Gio. Cavalcanti*, 2 vols. Firenze, 1838.

<sup>68</sup> Besides Muratori's great collection and the *Archivio Storico*, the Chronicles of Lombard, Umbrian, and Tuscan towns have been separately printed too voluminously for mention in a note.

<sup>69</sup> *L' Historia di Milano volgarmente scritta dall' eccellentissimo oratore M. Bernardino*



In Corio's somewhat stiff and cumbrous periods we trace the effort of a foreigner to gain by study what the Tuscans owed to nature. Yet he never suffered this stylistic preoccupation to spoil his qualities as an historian. His voluminous narrative is a mine of accurate information, illustrated with vivid pictures of manners and carefully considered portraits of eminent men. Reading it, we cannot but regret that Poggio and Bruno, Navagero and Bembo, judged it necessary to tell the tales of Florence and of Venice in a pseudo-Livian Latin. The 'History of Milan' is worth twenty of such humanistic exercises in rhetoric. Matarazzo displays excellences of a different, but of a rarer order. Unlike Corio, he was not anxious to show familiarity with rules of Tuscan writing, or to build again the periods of Boccaccio's ceremonious style. His language bears the stamp of its Perugian origin. It is, at the same time, unaffectedly dramatic, and penetrated with the charm of a distinguished personality. No one can read the tragedy of the Baglioni in this wonderful romance without acknowledging that he is in the hands of a great writer. The limpidity of the *Trecento* has here survived, and, blending with Renaissance enthusiasm for physical beauty and antique heroism, has produced a work of art unrivalled in its kind.<sup>70</sup>

Having advanced so far as to speak in this chapter of Corio and Matarazzo, I shall take occasion to notice a book which, appearing for the first time in 1476, may fairly be styled the most important work of Italian prose-fiction belonging to the fifteenth century. This is the 'Novellino' of Masuccio Guardato, a nobleman of Salerno, secretary to the Prince Roberto Sanseverino, and resident throughout his life at the Court of Naples.<sup>71</sup> The 'Novellino' is a collection of stories, fifty in number, arranged in five parts, which treat respectively of hypocrisy and the monastic vices, jealousy, feminine incontinence, the contrasts of pathos and of humour, and the generosity of princes. Each *Novella* is dedicated to a noble man or woman of Neapolitan society, and is followed by a reflective discourse, in which the author personally addresses his audience. Masuccio declares himself the disciple of Boccaccio and Juvenal.<sup>72</sup> Of the Roman poet's spirit he has plenty; for he gives the rein to rage in language of the most indignant virulence. Of Boccaccio's idiom and style, though we can trace the student's emulation, he can boast but little. Masuccio never reached the Latinistic smooth-

Corio, in Vinegia, per Giovan Maria Bonelli, MDLIII. 'Cronaca della Città di Perugia dal 1492 al 1503 di Francesco Matarazzo detto Maturanzio,' *Archivio Storico Italiano*, vol. xvi. par. ii. Of Corio's History I have made frequent use in the *Age of the Despots*. It is a book that repays frequent and attentive re-perusals. Those students who desire to gain familiarity at first hand with Renaissance life cannot be directed to a purer source.

<sup>70</sup> In *Studies in Italy and Greece*, article 'Perugia,' I have dealt more at large with Matarazzo's Chronicle than space admits of here.

<sup>71</sup> *Il Novellino di Masuccio Salernitano*. Edited by Luigi Settembrini. Napoli, Morano, 1874.

<sup>72</sup> Introduction to Part iii. *op. cit.* p. 239. 'Cognoscerai i lasciati vestigi del vetusto satiro Giovenale, e del famoso commendato poeta Boccaccio, l'ornatissimo idioma e stile del quale ti hai sempre ingegnato de imitare.'

ness of his model; and while he wrote Italian, his language was far from being Tuscan. Phrases culled from southern dialects are frequent; and the structure of the period is often ungrammatical. Masuccio was not a member of any humanistic clique. He lived among the nobles of a royal Court, and knew the common people intimately. This double experience is reflected in his language and his modes of thought. Both are unalloyed by pedantry, and precious for the student of contemporary manners.

The interest of the 'Novellino' is great when we regard it as the third collection of *Novelle* coming after Boccaccio's and Sacchetti's, and, from the point of view of art, occupying a middle place between them. The tales of the 'Decameron' were originally recited at Naples; and though Boccaccio was a thorough Tuscan, he borrowed something from the South which gave width, warmth and largeness to his writing. Masuccio is wholly Neapolitan in tone; but he seeks such charm of presentation and variety of matter as shall make his book worthy to take rank in general literature. Sacchetti has more of a purely local flavour. He is no less Florentine than Masuccio is Neapolitan; and, unlike Masuccio, he has taken little pains to adapt his work to other readers than his fellow-citizens. Boccaccio embraces all human life, seen in the light of vivid fancy by a *bourgeois* who was also a great comic and romantic poet. Sacchetti describes the *borghi*, *contrade*, and *piazze* of Florence; and his speech is seasoned with rare Tuscan salt of wit. Masuccio's world is that of the free-living Southern noble. He is penetrated with aristocratic feeling, treats willingly of arms and jousts and warfare, telling the tales of knights and ladies to a courtly company.<sup>73</sup> At the same time, the figures of the people move with incomparable vivacity across the stage; and his transcripts from life reveal the careless interpenetration of classes to which he was accustomed in Calabria.<sup>74</sup> Some of his stories are as simply *bourgeois* as any of Sacchetti's.<sup>75</sup>

When we compare Masuccio with Boccaccio we find many points of divergence, due to differences of temperament, social sympathies and local circumstance. Boccaccio is witty and malicious; Masuccio humorous and poignant. Boccaccio laughs indulgently at vices; Masuccio scourges them. Boccaccio makes a jest of superstition; Masuccio thunders against the hypocrites who bring religion into contempt. Boccaccio turns the world round for his recreation, submitting its follies to the subtle play of analytical fancy. Masuccio is terribly in earnest; whether sympathetic or vituperative, he makes the voice of his heart heard. Boccaccio's pictures are toned with a rare perception of harmony and delicate gradation. Masuccio brings what strikes his sense before us

<sup>73</sup> For an instance of Masuccio's feudal feeling, take this. A knight kills a licentious friar—'alquanto pentito per avere le sue possenti braccia con la morte di un Fra Minore contaminato' (*op. cit.* p. 13). It emerges in his description of the Order of the Ermine (*ibid.* p. 240). It is curious to compare this with his strong censure of the point of honour (pp. 388, 389) in a story which has the same blunt sense as Ariosto's episode of Giocondo. The Italian here prevails over the noble.

<sup>74</sup> See especially *Nov.* xi. and xxxviii.

<sup>75</sup> *Nov.* ii. iii. v. xi. xviii. xxix.

by a few firm touches. Boccaccio shows far finer literary tact. Yet there is something in the unpremeditated passion, pathos, humour, grossness, anger and enjoyment of Masuccio—a chord of masculine and native strength, a note of vigorous reality—that arrests attention even more imperiously than the prepared effects of the 'Decameron.' One point of undoubted excellence can be claimed for Masuccio. He was a great tragic artist in the rough, and his comedy displays an uncouth Rabelaisian realism. The lights and shadows cast upon his scene are brusque—like the sunlight and the shadow on a Southern city; whereas the painting of Boccaccio is distinguished by exquisite blendings of colour and chiaroscuro in subordination to the chosen key.

Masuccio displays his real power in his serious *Novelle*, when he gives vent to his furious hatred of a godless clergy, or describes some dreadful incident, like the tragedy of the two lovers in the lazar-house.<sup>76</sup> Scarcely less dramatic are his tales of comic sensuality.<sup>77</sup> Nor has he a less vivid sense of beauty. Some of his occasional pictures—the meeting of youths and maidens in the evening light of Naples; the lover who changed his jousting-badge because his lady was untrue; the tournament at Rimini; the portrait of Eugenia disguised as a *ragazzo de omo d' arme*—break upon us with the freshness of a smile or sunbeam.<sup>78</sup> We might almost detect a vein of Spanish imagination in certain of his episodes—in the midnight ride of the living monk after the dead friar strapped upon his palfrey, and in the ghastly murder of the woman and the dwarf.<sup>79</sup> The lowest classes of the people are presented with a salience worthy of Velasquez—cobblers, tailors, prostitutes, preaching friars, miracle-workers, relic-mongers, bawds, ruffians, lepers, highway robbers, gondoliers, inn-keepers, porters, Moorish slaves, the panders to base appetites and every sort of sin.<sup>80</sup> Masuccio felt no compunction in portraying vicious people as he knew them; but he reserved language of scathing vituperation for their enormities.<sup>81</sup>

From so much that is coarse, dreadful, and revolting, the romance of Masuccio's more genial tales detaches itself with charming grace and delicacy. Nothing in Boccaccio is lovelier than the story of the girl who puts on armour and goes at night to kill her faithless lover; or that of Mariotto and Giannozza, which is substantially the same as Romeo

<sup>76</sup> *Nov. xxxi.*—Masuccio's peculiar animosity against the clergy may be illustrated by comparing his story of the friar who persuaded the nun that she was chosen by the Holy Ghost (*Nov. ii.*) with Boccaccio's tale of the Angel Gabriel. See, too, the scene in the convent (*Nov. vi.*), the comedy of S. Bernardino's sermon (*Nov. xvi.*), the love-adventures of Cardinal Roderigo Borgia.

<sup>77</sup> For example, *Nov. vii. xiii. v.*

<sup>78</sup> *Op. cit.* pp. 292, 282, 391, 379.

<sup>79</sup> *Nov. i. and xxviii.* The second of these stories is dedicated to Francesco of Aragon, who, born in 1461, could not have been more than fifteen when this frightful tale of lust and blood was sent him. Nothing paints the manners of the time better than this fact.

<sup>80</sup> See *op. cit.* pp. 28, 68, 89, 141, 256, 273, 275, 380, 341, 343.

<sup>81</sup> For specimens of his invective read pp. 517, 273, 84, 275, 55, 65, 534. I have collected some of these passages, bearing on the clergy, in a note to p. 230 of *Age of the Despots*. No wonder that Masuccio's book was put upon the Index!

and Juliet; or that of Virginio Baglioni and Eugenia, surprised and slain by robbers near Brescia; or that of Marchetto and Lanzilao, the comrades in arms, which has points in common with Palamon and Arcite; or, lastly, that of the young Malem and his education by Giudotto Gambacorto.<sup>82</sup> It is the blending of so many elements—the interweaving of tragedy and comedy, satire and pathos, grossness and sentiment, in a style of unadorned sincerity, that places Masuccio high among novelists. Had his language been as pure as that of the earlier Tuscan or the later Italian authors, he would probably rank only second to Boccaccio in the estimation even of his fellow-countrymen. A foreigner, less sensitive to niceties of idiom, may be excused for recognising him as at least Bandello's equal in the story-teller's art. In moral quality he is superior not only to Bandello, but also to Boccaccio.

The greatest writer of Italian prose in the fifteenth century was a man of different stamp from Masuccio. Gifted with powers short only of the very highest, Leo Battista Alberti exercised an influence over the spirit of his age and race which was second to none but Lionardo's.<sup>83</sup> Sacchetti, Ser Giovanni, Masuccio, and the ordinary tribe of chroniclers pretended to no humanistic culture.<sup>84</sup> Alberti, on the contrary, was educated at Bologna, where he acquired the scientific knowledge of his age, together with such complete mastery of Latin that a work of his youth, the comedy 'Philodoxius,' passed for a genuine product of antiquity. This man of many-sided genius came into the world too soon for the perfect exercise of his singular faculties. Whether we regard him from the point of view of art, of science, or of literature, he occupies in each department the position of precursor, pioneer, and indicator. Always original and always fertile, he prophesied of lands he was not privileged to enter, leaving the memory of dim and varied greatness rather than any solid monument behind him.<sup>85</sup> Of his mechanical discoveries this is not the place to speak; nor can I estimate the value of his labours in the science of perspective.<sup>86</sup> It is as a man of letters that he comes before us in this chapter.

The date of Alberti's birth is uncertain. But we may fix it probably at about the year 1405. He was born at Venice, where his father, exiled

<sup>82</sup> Nov. xxvii. xxxiii. xxxv. xxxvii. xlviii.

<sup>83</sup> See *Revival of Learning*, pp. 485-486, for some account of Alberti's life and place among the humanists; *Fine Arts*, p. 622, for his skill as an architect.

<sup>84</sup> Sacchetti, we have seen, called himself *uomo discolo*; Ser Giovanni proclaimed himself a *pecorone*; Masuccio had the culture of a nobleman; Corio and Matarazzo, if we are right in identifying the latter with Francesco Maturanzio, were both men of considerable erudition.

<sup>85</sup> The most charming monument of Alberti's memory is the *Life* by an anonymous writer, published in Muratori and reprinted in Bonucci's edition, vol. i. Bonucci conjectures, without any substantial reason, that it was composed by Alberti himself.

<sup>86</sup> For the *Camera Optica*, *Reticolo de' dipintori*, and *Bolide Albertiana*, see the Preface (pp. lxx-lxix) to Anicio Bonucci's edition of the *Opere Volgari di L. B. Alberti*, Firenze, 1843, five vols. All references will be made to this comprehensive but uncritical collection. Hubert Janitschek's edition of the *Treatises on Art* should be consulted for its introduction and carefully prepared text—Vienna, 1877, in the *Quellenschriften für Kunstgeschichte*.

with the other members of his noble house by the Albizzi, had taken refuge. After Cosimo de' Medici's triumph over the Albizzi in 1434, Leo Battista returned to Florence.<sup>87</sup> It was as a Florentine-citizen that his influence in restoring the vulgar literature to honour, was destined to be felt. He did not, however, reside continuously in the city of his ancestors, but moved from town to town, with a restlessness that savoured somewhat of voluntary exile. It is, indeed, noteworthy how many of the greatest Italians—Dante, Giotto, Petrarch, Alberti, Lionardo, Tasso: men who powerfully helped to give the nation intellectual coherence—were wanderers. They sought their home and saw their spiritual *patria* in no one abiding-place.<sup>88</sup> Thus, amid the political distractions of the Italian people, rose that ideal of unity to which Rome, Naples, Florence, Venice, Ferrara contributed, but which owned no metropolis. Florence remained to the last the brain of Italy. Yet Florence, by stepmotherly ingratitude, by Dante's exile, by the alienation of Petrarch, by Alberti's homeless boyhood, prepared for the race a new culture, Tuscan in origin, national by diffusion and assimilation. Alberti died at Rome in 1472, just when Poliziano, a youth of eighteen, was sounding the first notes of that music which re-awakened the Muse of Tuscany from her long sleep, and gave new melodies to Italy.

In his proemium to the Third Book of the 'Family,' addressed to Francesco degli Alberti, Leo Battista enlarges on the duty of cultivating the mother tongue.<sup>89</sup> After propounding the question whether the loss of the empire acquired by their Roman ancestors—*l' antiquo nostro imperio amplissimo*—or the loss of Latin as a spoken language—*l' antiqua nostra gentilissima lingua latina*—had been the greater privation to the Italian race, he gives it as his opinion that, though the former robbed them of imperial dignity, the latter was the heavier misfortune. To repair that loss is the duty of one who had made literature his study. If he desires to benefit his fellow-countrymen, he will not use a dead language, imperfectly comprehended by a few learned men, but will bend the idiom of the people to the needs of erudition. 'I willingly admit,' he argues, 'that the ancient Latin tongue is very copious and of beauty polished to perfection. Yet I do not see what our Tuscan has in it so hateful that worthy matter, when conveyed thereby, should be displeasing to us.' Pedants who despise their mother speech, are mostly men incapable of expressing themselves in the latter; 'and granted they are right in saying that the ancient tongue has undisputed authority, because so many learned men have employed it, the like honour

<sup>87</sup> The sentence of banishment was first removed in 1428; but the rights of burghership were only restored to the Alberti in 1434. Leo Battista finished the Treatise on Painting at Florence, Sept. 7, 1435 (see Janitschek, *op. cit.* p. iii.), and dedicated it to Brunelleschi, July 17, 1436. From that dedication it would seem that he had only recently returned.

<sup>88</sup> A passage in the *Della Tranquillità dell' Animo* (*Op. Volg.* i. 35) shows how Alberti had lived into the conception of cosmopolitan citizenship. It may be compared with another in the *Teogenio* (*op. cit.* iii. 194) where he argues that love for one's country, even without residence in it, satisfies the definition of a citizen.

<sup>89</sup> *Op. cit.* ii. 215-221.

will certainly be paid our language of to-day, if men of culture take the pains to purify and polish it.' He then declares that, meaning to be useful to the members of his house, and to bequeath a record of their ancient dignity to their descendants, he has resolved to choose the tongue in which he will be generally understood.

This proemium explains Alberti's position in all his Italian writings. Aiming at the general good, convinced that a living nation cannot use a dead language with dignity and self-respect, he makes the sacrifice of a scholar's pride to public utility, and has the sense to perceive that the day of erudite exclusiveness is over. No one felt more than Alberti the greatness of the antique Roman race. No one was prouder of his descent from those patricians of the Commonwealth, who tamed and ruled the world. The memory of that Roman past, which turned the generation after Dante into a nation of students, glowed in Alberti's breast with more than common fervour.<sup>90</sup> The sonorous introduction to the first book of the 'Family' reviews the glories of the Empire and the decadence of Rome with a pomp of phrase, a passion of eloquence, that stir our spirit like the tramp of legions waking echoes in a ruined Roman colonnade.<sup>91</sup> Yet in spite of this devotion to the past, Alberti, like Villani, felt that his Italians of the modern age had destinies and auspices apart from those of ancient Rome. He was resolved to make the speech of that new nation, heiress of the Latin name, equal in dignity to Cicero's and Livy's. What Rome had done, Rome's children should do again. But the times were changed, and Alberti was a true son of the Renaissance. He approached his task in the spirit of a humanist. His style is overcharged with Latinisms; his periods are cumbersome; his matter is loaded with citations and scholastic instances drawn from the repertoires of erudition.<sup>92</sup> The *vivida vis* of inspiration fails. His work is full of reminiscences. The golden simplicity of the *Trecento* yields to a studied effort after dignity of diction, culture of amplitude. Still the writer's energy is felt in massive paragraphs of powerful declamation. His eloquence does not degenerate into frothy rhetoric; and when he wills, he finds pithy phrases to express the mind of a philosopher and poet. That he was born and reared in exile accounts for a lack of racy Tuscan in his prose; and the structure of his sentences proves that

<sup>90</sup> Such phrases as *i nostri maggiori patrizii in Roma* (i. 37), *la quasi dovuta a noi per le nostre virtù da tutte le genti riverenza e obbedienza* (ii. 218), *nostri ottimi passati Itali debellarono e sotto averono tutte le genti* (ii. 9), might be culled in plenty. Alberti shows how deep was the Latin idealism of the Renaissance, and how impossible it would have been for the Italians to found their national self-consciousness on aught but a recovery of the past.

<sup>91</sup> Especially the fine passage beginning, 'Quello imperio meraviglioso senza termini, quel dominio di tutte le genti acquistato con *nostri latini auspici*, ottenuto colla *nostra industria*, amplificato con *nostre armi latine*' (ii. 8); and the apostrophe, 'E tu, Italia nobilissima, capo e arce di tutto l' universo mondo' (*ibid.* 13).

<sup>92</sup> An example of servile submission to classical authority might be chosen from Alberti's discourse on Friendship (*Famiglia*, lib. iv. *op. cit.* ii. 415), where he adduces Sylla and Mark Antony in contradiction to his general doctrine that only upright conversation among friends can lead to mutual profit.



he had been accustomed to think in Latin before he made Italian serve his turn.<sup>93</sup> Still, though for these and other reasons his works were not of the kind to animate a nation, they are such as still may be read with profit and with pleasure by men who seek for solid thoughts in noble diction.

Alberti's principal prose work, the 'Trattato della Famiglia,' was written to instruct the members of his family in the customs of their ancestors, and to perpetuate those virtues of domestic life which he regarded as the sound foundation of a commonwealth. The first three books are said to have been composed within the space of ninety days in Rome, and the fourth added at a later period.<sup>94</sup> It is a dialogue, the interlocutors being relatives of the Alberti blood. Nearly all the illustrative matter is drawn from the biographies of their forefathers. The scene is laid at Padua, and the essay contains frequent allusions to their exile.<sup>95</sup> No word of invective against the Albizzi who had ruined them, no vituperation of the city which had permitted the expulsion of her sons, escapes the lips of any of the speakers. The grave sadness that tempers the whole dialogue, is marred by neither animosity nor passion. Yet though the 'Family' was written in exile for exiles, the ideal of domestic life it paints, is Florentine.<sup>96</sup> Taken in its whole extent, this treatise is the most valuable document which remains to us from the times of the oligarchy, when Florence was waging war with the Visconti, and before the Medici had based their despotism upon popular favour. From its pages a tolerably complete history of a great commercial family might be extracted; and this study would form a valuable commentary on the public annals of the commonwealth during the earlier portion of the fifteenth century.<sup>97</sup>

<sup>93</sup> Alberti's loss of training in the vernacular is noticed by his anonymous biographer (*op. cit.* i. xciv.). It will be observed by students of his writings that he does not speak of *la nostra italiana* but *la nostra toscana* (ii. 221). Again (iv. 12) *in lingua toscana* is the phrase used in his dedication of the Essay on Painting to Brunelleschi.

<sup>94</sup> The anonymous biographer says: 'Scripsit præterea et affinium suorum gratia, ut linguae latine ignavis prodesset, patrio sermone annum ante trigesimum ætatis suæ: etruscos libros, primum, secundum, ac tertium de Familia, quos Romæ die nonagesimo quam inchoarat, absolvit; sed inelimosos et asperos neque usquequaque etruscos. . . . post annos tres, quam primos ediderat, quartum librum ingratis protulit' (*op. cit.* i. xciv. c.). It appears from a reference in Book ii. (*op. cit.* ii. xxviii.) that the Treatise was still in process of composition after 1438; and there are strong reasons for believing that Book iii., as it is now numbered, was written separately and after the rest of the dialogue.

<sup>95</sup> Note especially the passage in Book iii., *op. cit.* ii. 256 *et seq.*

<sup>96</sup> There is, I think, good reason to believe the testimony of the anonymous biographer, who says this Treatise was written before Alberti's thirtieth year; and if he returned to Florence in 1434, we must take the date of his birth about 1404. The scene of the *Tranquillità dell' Animo* is laid in the Duomo at Florence; we may therefore believe it to have been a later work, and its allusions to the *Famiglia* are, in my opinion, trustworthy.

<sup>97</sup> The pedigree prefixed to the Dialogue in Bonucci's edition would help the student in his task. I will here cite the principal passages of importance I have noticed. In volume ii. p. 102, we find a list of the Alberti remarkable for literary, scientific, artistic, and ecclesiastical distinctions. On p. 124 we read of their dispersion over



The first book of the 'Famiglia' deals with the duties of the elder to the younger members of the household, and the observance owed by sons and daughters to their parents. It is an essay 'De Officiis' within the circle of the home, embracing minute particulars of conduct, and suggesting rules for education from the cradle upwards.<sup>98</sup> The second book takes up the question of matrimony. The respective ages at which the sexes ought to marry, the moral and physical qualities of a good wife, the maintenance of harmony between a wedded couple, their separate provinces and common duty to the State in the procreation of children, are discussed with scientific completeness. The third book, modelled on the 'Economicus' of Xenophon, is devoted to thrift. How to use our personal faculties, our wealth, and our time to best advantage, forms its principal theme. The fourth book treats of friendship—family

the Levant, Greece, Spain, France, England, Belgium, Germany, and the chief Italian towns. Their misfortunes in exile are touchingly alluded to with a sobriety of phrase that dignifies the grief it veils, in the noble passage beginning with p. 256. Their ancient splendour in the tournaments and games of Florence, when the people seemed to have eyes only for men of the Alberti blood, is described on p. 228; their palaces and country houses on p. 279. A list of the knights, generals, and great lawyers of the Casa Alberti is given at p. 346. The honesty of their commercial dealings and their reputation for probity form the themes of a valuable digression, pp. 204-206, where we learn the extent of their trade and the magnitude of their contributions to the State expenses. On p. 210 there is a statement that this house alone imported from Flanders enough wool to supply the cloth trade, not only of Florence, but also of the larger part of Tuscany. The losses of a great commercial family are reckoned on p. 357; while p. 400 supplies the story of one vast loan of 80,000 golden florins advanced by Ricciardo degli Alberti to Pope John. The friendship of Piero degli Alberti contracted with Filippo Maria Visconti and King Ladislaus of Naples is described in the autobiographical discourse introduced at pp. 386-399. This episode is very precious for explaining the relation between Italian princes and the merchants who resided at their courts. Their servant Buto, p. 375, should not be omitted from the picture; nor should the autobiographical narrative given by Giannozzo of his relation to his wife (pp. 320-328) be neglected, since this carries us into the very centre of a Florentine home. The moral tone, the political feeling, and the domestic habits of the house in general must be studied in the description of the Casa, Bottega, and Villa, the discourses on education, and the discussion of public and domestic duties. The commercial aristocracy of Florence lives before us in this Treatise. We learn from it to know exactly what the men who sustained the liberties of Italy against the tyrants of Milan thought and felt, at a period of history when the old fabric of mediæval ideas had broken down, but when the new Italy of the Renaissance had not yet been fully formed. If, in addition to the *Trattato della Famiglia*, the letters addressed by Alessandra Macinghi negli Strozzi to her children in exile be included in such a study, a vivid picture might be formed of the domestic life of a Florentine family.\* These letters were written from Florence to sons of the Casa Strozzi at Naples, Bruges, and elsewhere between the years 1447 and 1465. They contain minute information about expenditure, taxation, dress, marriages, friendships, and all the public and personal relations of a noble Florentine family. Much, moreover, can be gathered from them concerning the footing of the members of the circle in exile. The private *ricordi* of heads of families, portions of which have been already published from the archives of the Medici and Strozzi, if more fully investigated, would complete this interesting picture in many of its important details.

<sup>98</sup> Notice the discussion of wet-nurses, the physical and moral evils likely to ensue from an improper choice of the nurse (*op. cit.* ii. 52-56).

\* *Lettere di una Gentildonna fiorentina*, Firenze, Sansoni, 1877.

connexions and alliances, the usefulness of friends in good and evil fortune, the mutual benefits enjoyed by men who live honestly together in a social state.<sup>99</sup> It may be seen from this sketch that the architecture of the treatise is complete and symmetrical. The first book establishes the principles of domestic morality on which a family exists and flourishes. The second provides for its propagation through marriage. The third shows how its resources are to be distributed and preserved. The fourth explains its relations to similar communities existing in an organised society. Many passages in the essay have undoubtedly the air of truisms; but this impression of commonplaceness is removed by the strong specific character of all the illustrations. Alberti's wisdom is common to civilised humanity. His conception of life is such as only suits a Florentine, and his examples are drawn from the annals of a single family.

I have already dwelt at some length in a former volume on the most celebrated section of this treatise—the 'Padre di Famiglia' or the 'Economico'.<sup>100</sup> To repeat those observations here would be superfluous. Yet I cannot avoid a digression upon a matter of much obscurity relating to the authorship of that book.<sup>101</sup> Until recently, this discourse upon the economy of a Florentine household passed under the name of Agnolo Pandolfini, and was published separately as his undoubted work. The interlocutors in the dialogue, which bore the title of 'Governo della Famiglia,' are various members of the Pandolfini family, and all allusions to the Alberti and their exile are wanting. The style of the 'Governo' differs in many important respects from that of Alberti; and yet the arrangement of the material and the substance of each paragraph are so closely similar in both forms of the treatise as to prove that the work is substantially identical. Pandolfini's essay, which I shall call 'Il Governo,' passes for one of the choicest monuments of ancient Tuscan diction. Alberti's 'Economico,' though it is more idiomatic than the rest of his 'Famiglia,' betrays the Latinisms of a scholar. It is clear from a comparison of the two treatises either that Alberti appropriated Pandolfini's 'Governo,' brought its style into harmony with his own, and gave it a place between the second and the fourth books of his essay on the Family; or else that this third book of Alberti's 'Famiglia' was rewritten by an author who commanded a purer Italian. In the former case, Alberti changed the *dramatis personæ* by substituting members of his own house for the Pandolfini. In the latter case, the anonymous compiler paid a similar compliment to the Pandolfini by such alterations as obliterated the Alberti, and presented the treatise

<sup>99</sup> These topics of *Amicitia*, as the virtue on which society is based, are further discussed in a separate little dialogue, *La Cena di Famiglia* (*op. cit.* vol. i.).

<sup>100</sup> *Age of the Despots*, pp. 121-123.

<sup>101</sup> In stating the question, and in all that concerns the MS. authority upon which a judgment must be formed, I am greatly indebted to the kindness of Signor Virginio Cortesi, who has placed at my disposal his unpublished Essay on the *Governo della Famiglia di Agnolo Pandolfini*. As the title of his work shows, he is a believer in Pandolfini's authorship.

to the world as part of their own history. That Agnolo Pandolfini was himself guilty of this plagiarism is rendered improbable by a variety of circumstances. Yet the problem does not resolve itself into the simple question whether Pandolfini or Alberti was the plagiarist. Supposing Alberti to have been the original author, there is no difficulty in believing that the 'Governo' was a redaction made from his work by some anonymous hand in honour of the Pandolfini family. On the contrary, if we assume Agnolo Pandolfini to have been the author, then Alberti himself was guilty of a gross and open plagiarism.<sup>102</sup>

It will be useful to give some account of the MSS. upon which the editions of the 'Governo' and the 'Economico' are based.<sup>103</sup> In the first edition of the 'Governo' (Tartini e Franchi, Firenze, 1734) six codices are mentioned. Of these the Codex Pandolfini A, on which the editors chiefly relied, has been removed from Italy to Paris. The Codex Pandolfini B was written in 1476 at Poggibonsi by a certain Giuliano di Niccolajo Martini. Whether the Codex Pandolfini A professed to be an autograph copy, I do not know; but the editors of 1734, referring to it, state that the Senator Filippo Pandolfini, member of the Della Crusca, corrected the errors, restored the text, and improved the diction of the treatise by the help of a still more ancient MS. This admission on their part is significant. It opens, for the advocates of Alberti's authorship, innumerable suspicions as to the part played by Filippo Pandolfini in the preparation of the 'Governo.' Nor can it be denied that the lack of an autograph of the 'Governo' renders the settlement of the disputed question very difficult.

Of Alberti's 'Trattato della Famiglia' we have three autograph copies: (i) Cod. Magl. Classe iv. No. 38 in folio; (ii) Riccardiana 1220; (iii) Riccardiana 176. The first of these is the most important; but it presents some points of singularity. In the first place, the third book, which is the 'Economico,' has been inserted into the original codex, and shows a different style of writing. In the second place, the first two books contain numerous corrections, additions, erasures, and recorections, obviously made by Alberti himself. Some of the interpolated passages in the first two books are found to coincide with parts of the 'Governo;' and Signor Cortesi, to whose critical Study I have already referred, argues with great show of reason that Alberti, when he determined to incorporate the 'Governo' in his 'Famiglia,' enriched the earlier books of that essay with fragments which he did not find it

<sup>102</sup> I use this word according to its present connotation. But such literary plagiarism was both more common and less disgraceful in the fifteenth century. Alberti himself incorporated passages of the *Fiammetta* in his *Deifira*, and Jacopo Nardi in his *Storia Fiorentina* appropriated the whole of Buonaccorsi's *Diaries* (1498-1512) with slight alterations and a singularly brief allusion to their author.

<sup>103</sup> Such information, as will be seen, is both vague and meagre. The MSS. of the *Governo* in particular do not seem to have been accurately investigated, and are insufficiently described even by Cortesi. Yet this problem, like that of the Malespini and Compagni Chronicles, cannot be set at rest without a detailed comparison of all existing codices.

convenient to leave in their original place. Still it should be remembered that this argument can be reversed; for the anonymous compiler of the 'Governo,' if he had access to Alberti's autograph, may have chosen to appropriate sentences culled from the earlier portions of the 'Famiglia.'

It is noticeable that the 'Economico,' even though it forms the third book of the Treatise on the Family, has a separate title and a separate introduction, with a dedication to Francesco Alberti, and a distinct peroration.<sup>104</sup> It is, in fact, an independent composition, and occurs in more than one MS. of the fifteenth century detached from the rest of the 'Famiglia.' In style it is far freer and more racy than is usual with Alberti's writing. Of this its author seems to have been aware; for he expressly tells his friend and kinsman Francesco that he has sought to approach the purity and simplicity of Xenophon.<sup>105</sup>

The anonymous writer of Alberti's life says that he composed three books on the Family at Rome before he was thirty, and a fourth book three years later. If we follow Tiraboschi in taking 1414 for the date of his birth, the first three books must have been composed before 1444 and the fourth in 1447. The former of these dates (1444) receives some confirmation from a Latin letter written by Leonardo Dati to Alberti, acknowledging the Treatise on the Family, in June 1443. Dati tells him that he finds fault with the essay for being composed 'in a more majestic and perhaps a harsher style, especially in the first book, than the Florentine language and the judgment of the laity would tolerate.' He goes on, however, to observe that 'afterwards the language becomes far more sweet and satisfactory to the ear'—a criticism which seems to suit the altered manner of the third book. With reference to the date 1447, in which the 'Famiglia' may have been completed, Cortesi remarks that Pandolfini died in 1446. He suggests that, upon this event, Alberti appropriated the 'Governo' and rewrote it, and that the 'Economico,' though it holds the place of the third book in the treatise, is really the fourth book mentioned by the anonymous biographer. The suggestion is ingenious; and if we can once bring ourselves to believe that Alberti committed a deliberate act of larceny, immediately after his friend Pandolfini's death, then the details which have been already given concerning the autograph of the 'Famiglia' and the discrepancies in its style of composition add confirmation to the theory. There are, however, good reasons for assigning Alberti's birth to the year 1404 or even

<sup>104</sup> The anonymous biographer expressly states that the fourth book was written later than the other three, and dedicated to the one Alberti who took any interest in the previous portion of the work. This, together with the isolation and more perfect diction of Book iii., is strong presumption in favour of its having been an afterthought.

<sup>105</sup> The *Economicus* of Xenophon served as common material for the *Economico* and the *Governo*, whatever we may think about the authorship of these two essays. Many parallel passages in Palmieri's *Vita Civile* can be referred to the same source. To what extent Alberti knew Greek is not ascertained; but even in the bad Latin translations of that age a flavour so peculiar as that of Xenophon's style could not have escaped his fine sense.

1402.<sup>106</sup> In that case Alberti's Roman residence would fall into the third decade of the century, and the last book of the 'Famiglia' (which I am inclined to believe is the one now called the third) would have been composed before Pandolfini's death. That Alberti kept his MSS. upon the stocks and subjected them to frequent revision is certain; and this may account for one reference occurring in it to an event which happened in 1438.

Is it rational to adopt the hypothesis of Alberti's plagiarism? Let us distinctly understand what it implies. In his own preface to the 'Economico' Alberti states that he has striven to reproduce the simple and intelligible style of Xenophon;<sup>107</sup> and there is no doubt that this portion of the 'Famiglia,' whether we regard it as Alberti's or as Pandolfini's property, was closely modelled on the 'Economicus.' Cortesi suggests that the reference to Xenophon was purposely introduced by Alberti in order to put his readers off the scent. Nor, if we accept the hypothesis of plagiarism, can we restrict ourselves to this accusation merely. In the essay 'Della Tranquillità dell' Animo' Alberti introduces Agnolo Pandolfini as an interlocutor, and makes him refer to the third book of the 'Famiglia' as a genuine production of Alberti.<sup>108</sup> In other words, he must not only have appropriated Pandolfini's work, and laid claim to it in the preface to his 'Economico;' but he must also have referred to it as his own composition in a speech ascribed to the real author, which he meant for publication. That is to say, he made the man whose work he stole pronounce its panegyric and refer it to the thief. That Pandolfini was dead when he committed these acts of treason would not be sufficient to explain Alberti's audacity; for according to the advocates of Pandolfini's authorship, the MS. formed a known and valued portion of his sons' inheritance. Is it *primâ facie* probable that Alberti, even in those days of looser literary copyright than ours, should have exposed himself to detection in so palpable and gross a fraud?

Before answering this question in the affirmative, it may be asked what positive grounds there are for crediting Pandolfini with the original authorship. At present no autograph of Pandolfini is forthcoming. His claim to authorship rests on tradition, and on the Pandolfini cast of the dialogue in certain MSS. At the same time, the admissions made by the editors of 1734 regarding their most trusted codex have been already shown to be suspicious. It is also noticeable that Vespasiano in his Life of Agnolo Pandolfini, though he professes to have been intimately acquainted with this excellent Florentine burgher, does not mention the 'Governo della Famiglia.'<sup>109</sup> The omission is singular, supposing the treatise to have then existed under Pandolfini's name, for Vespasiano was himself a writer of Italian in an age when Latin scholarship

<sup>106</sup> See *Op. Volg.* vol. i. pp. lxxxvi-lxxxviii.

<sup>107</sup> *Op. Volg.* ii. p. 223.

<sup>108</sup> *Op. Volg.* i. 10.

<sup>109</sup> It should, however, be added that Vespasiano alludes to Pandolfini's habits of study and composition after his retirement to Signa. Yet he does not cite the *Governo*.

claimed almost exclusive attention. He would, we should have thought, have been eager to name so distinguished a man among his fellow-authors in the vulgar tongue.

Granting the force of these considerations, it must still be admitted that there remain grave objections to accepting the 'Economico' of Alberti as the original of these two treatises. In the first place, the 'Governo' is a masterpiece of Tuscan; and it is far more reasonable to suppose that the 'Economico' was copied from the 'Governo' with such alterations as adapted it to the manner of the 'Famiglia,' than to assume that the 'Economico' received a literary rehandling which reduced it from its more rhetorical to a popular form. The passage from simple to complex in literature admits of easier explanation than the reverse process. Moreover, if Alberti admired a racy Tuscan style and could command it for the 'Economico,' why did he not continue to use it in his subsequent compositions? In the second place, the 'Governo,' as it stands, is suited to what Vespasiano tells us about Agnolo Pandolfini. He was a scholar trained in the humanities of the earlier Renaissance and a statesman who retired from public life, disgusted with the times, to studious leisure at his villa. Now, Giannozzo Alberti, who takes the chief part in the 'Economico,' proclaims himself a man of business, without learning. Those passages of the 'Governo' which seem inappropriate to such a character are absent from the 'Economico;' but some of them appear in Alberti's other works, the 'Teogenio' and 'Della Tranquillità.' From this circumstance Signor Cortesi infers that Alberti, working with Pandolfini's essay before him, made such alterations as brought the drift of the discourse within the scope of Giannozzo's requirements. The advocates of Alberti's authorship are bound to reverse this theory, and to assume that the author of the 'Governo' suited the 'Economico' to Pandolfini by infusing a tincture of scholarship into Giannozzo's speeches.<sup>110</sup>

We have still to ask who could the author of the 'Governo,' if it was not Agnolo Pandolfini, have been? The first answer to this question is: Alberti himself. The anonymous biographer tells us that he wrote the first three books at Rome, and that he afterwards made great efforts to improve his Tuscan style and render it more popular. It is not, therefore, impossible that he should himself have fitted that portion of his 'Famiglia' with new characters, omitted the Alberti, and given the honours of the dialogue to Pandolfini. The treatise, as he first planned it (according to this hypothesis), has a passionate digression upon the exile of the Alberti, followed by a declamation against public life and politicians. To have circulated these passages in an essay intended for Florentine readers, after Alberti's recall by Cosimo de' Medici, would have been unwise. Alberti, therefore, may only have retained

<sup>110</sup> It is clear that all this reasoning upon internal evidence can be turned to the advantage of both sides in the dispute. The question will have finally to be settled on external grounds (comparison of MSS.), combined with a wise use of such arguments from style as have already been cited.



such portions of them as could rouse no animosity, revive no painful reminiscences, and be appropriately placed upon the lips of Pandolfini. As it stands in the 'Governo,' the invective against statecraft is scarcely in keeping with Pandolfini's character. Though he retired from public life disgusted and ill at ease, the conclusion that no man should seek to serve the State except from a strict sense of duty, sounds strange when spoken by this veteran politician. Taken as the climax to the history of the wrongs inflicted upon the Alberti, this passage is dramatically in harmony with Giannozzo's experience.<sup>111</sup> With regard to the noticeable improvement of style in the 'Economico,' we might argue that after Alberti had enjoyed facilities at Florence of acquiring his native idiom, he remodelled that section of his earlier work which he intended for the people. And the same line of argument would account for the independence of the 'Economico' and its occurrence in separate MSS. Had Alberti designed what we now call a plagiarism, what need was there to call attention to it by prefixing an introduction to the third book of a continuous treatise?

It is not, however, necessary to defend Alberti from the charge of fraud by suggesting that he was himself the author of the 'Governo.' There existed, as we shall soon see, a class of semi-cultivated scribes at Florence, whose business consisted in manufacturing literature for the people. They rewrote, refashioned, condensed, abstracted whatever seemed to furnish entertainment and instruction for their public. Their style was close to the vulgar speech and frankly idiomatic. That one of these men should have made the necessary alterations in the third book of the 'Famiglia' to remove the recollection of the Alberti exile, and to prepare it for popular reading, is by no means impossible. The 'Governo' is shorter and more condensed than the 'Economico.' The rhetorical and dramatic elements are reduced; and the material is communicated in a style of gnomic pregnancy. If it was modelled upon the 'Economico' in the way I have suggested, the writer of the abstract was a man of no common ability, with a very keen sense of language and a faculty for investing a work of art and fine literature with the *naïveté* and grace of popular style. He also understood the necessity of providing his chief interlocutor, Agnolo Pandolfini, with a character different from that of Giannozzo Alberti; and he had the tact to realise that character by innumerable touches. Great additional support would be given to this hypothesis, if we could trust Bonucci's assertion that he had seen and transcribed a MS. of the 'Governo' adapted with a set of characters selected from the Pazzi family. It would then seem clear that the 'Governo' was an essay which every father of a family wished to possess for the instruction of his household, and to connect with the past history of his own race. Unluckily, Signor Bonucci, though he prints this Pazzi *rifacimento*, gives no information as to the source of

<sup>111</sup> Anyhow, and whatever may have been the source of Alberti's *Economico*, the whole scene describing exile and winding up with the tirade against a political career, is a very noble piece of writing. If space sufficed, it might be quoted as the finest specimen of Alberti's eloquence. See *Op. Volg.* v. pp. 256-266.



the MS. or any hint whereby its existence can be ascertained.<sup>112</sup> We must, therefore, omit it from our reckoning.

As the case at present stands, it is impossible to form a decisive opinion regarding the authorship of this famous treatise. The necessary critical examination of MSS. has not yet been made, and the arguments used on either side from internal evidence are not conclusive. My own prepossession is still in favour of Alberti. I may, however, observe that after reading Signor Cortesi's inedited essay, I perceive the case in favour of Pandolfini to be far stronger than I had expected.<sup>113</sup>

Space will not permit a full discussion of Alberti's numerous writings and yet their bearing on the best opinion of his time is so important that some notice of them must be taken. Together with the 'Famiglia' we may class the 'Deiciarchia,' or, as it should probably be written, the 'De Iciarchia.'<sup>114</sup> This, like the majority of his moral treatises, is a dialogue, and its subject is civic virtue. Having formed the ideal family, he next considers the functions of householders, born to guide the State. The chief point of the discourse is that no one should be idle, but that all should labour in some calling worthy of the dignity of man.<sup>115</sup> This seems a simple doctrine; but it is so inculcated as to make us remember the Guelf laws of Florence, whereby *scioperati* were declared criminals. It must not, however, be supposed that Alberti confines himself to the development of this single theme. His 'Deiciarchia' is rather to be regarded as a treatise on the personal qualities of men to whom the conduct of a commonwealth has been by accident of birth entrusted.

A second class of Alberti's dialogues discuss the contemplative life. In the 'Famiglia' and the 'Deiciarchia' man is regarded as a social and domestic being. In the 'Tranquillità dell' Animo' and the 'Teogenio' the inner life of the student and the sage comes under treatment. The former of these dialogues owes much of its interest to the interlocutors and to the scene where it was laid.<sup>116</sup> Leon Battista Alberti, Niccolò di Veri dei Medici, and Agnolo Pandolfini meet inside the Florentine Duomo, which is described in a few words of earnest admiration for its majesty and strength.<sup>117</sup> These friends begin a conversation, which soon turns upon the means of preserving the mind in repose and avoiding perturbations from the passions. The three books are enriched with copious allusions to Alberti's works and personal habits—his skill as a

<sup>112</sup> See *Op. Volg.* Preface to vol. v.

<sup>113</sup> It is greatly to be desired that Signor Cortesi should print this *Studio Critico*, and, if possible, append to it an account of the MSS. on which Pandolfini's claims to be considered the original author rest.

<sup>114</sup> *Op. Volg.* vol. iii. The meaning of the title appears on p. 132, where the word *Iciarco* is defined *Supremo uomo e primario principe della famiglia sua*. It is a compound of *oikos* and *ἀρχή*.

<sup>115</sup> See pp. 24, 28, 88, and the fine humanistic passage on p. 47, which reads like an expansion of Dante's *Fatti non foste per viver come bruti* in Ulysses' speech to his comrades.

<sup>116</sup> *Op. Volg.* vol. i.

<sup>117</sup> He calls it *il nostro tempio massimo* and speaks of *il culto divino*, pp. 7-9.

musician and a statuary, the gymnastic feats of his youth, and his efforts to benefit the State by intellectual labour. They form a valuable supplement to the anonymous biography. The philosophical material is too immediately borrowed from Cicero and Seneca to be of much importance. The 'Teogenio' is a more attractive, and, as it seems to me, a riper work.<sup>118</sup> Of Alberti's ethical discourses I am inclined to rate this next to the 'Famiglia,' nor did the Italian Renaissance produce any disquisition of the kind more elevated in feeling, finer in temper, or glowing with an eloquence at once so spontaneous and so dignified. We have to return to Petrarch to find the same high humanistic passion; and Alberti's Italian is here more winning than Petrarch's Latin. Had Pico condescended to the vulgar tongue, he might have produced work of similar quality; for the essay on the Dignity of Man is written in the same spirit.

The 'Teogenio' was sent with a letter of dedication to Lionello d' Este not long after his father's death.<sup>119</sup> Alberti apologises for its Italian style and assures the prince it had been written merely to console him in his evil fortunes. The speakers are two, Teogenio and Microtiro.<sup>120</sup> The dialogue opens with a passage on friendship, and a somewhat laboured description of the grove where Teogenio intends to pass the day. Microtiro has come from the city. His friend, the recluse, welcomes him to the country with these words: 'Ma sediamo, se così ti piace, qui fra questi mirti, in luogo non men delizioso che vostri teatri e tempi amplissimi e sontuosissimi.' This strikes the keynote of the treatise, the theme of which is the superiority of study in the country over the distractions of the town. Reading it, we see how rightly Landino assigned his part to Alberti in the Camaldolese Discussions.<sup>121</sup> That ideal of rural solitude which the Italian scholars inherited from their Roman forefathers, receives its earliest and finest treatment in this dialogue. It is not communion with nature so much as the companionship of books and the pursuit of study in a tranquil corner of the Tuscan hills, that Alberti has selected for his panegyric.<sup>122</sup> 'The society of the illustrious dead,' he says in one of the noblest passages of the essay, 'can be enjoyed by me at leisure here; and when I choose to converse with sages, politicians or great poets, I have but to turn to my bookshelves, and my company is better than your palaces with all their crowds of flatterers and clients can afford.'<sup>123</sup> After enlarging on the manifold advantages of a student's life, he concludes the book

<sup>118</sup> *Op. Volg.* vol. iii.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.* p. 160. This enables us to fix the date within certain limits. Niccolò III. of Este died 1441. Lionello died 1450. Alberti speaks of the essay as having been already some time in circulation. It must therefore have been written before 1440.

<sup>120</sup> Like Boccaccio, Alberti is fond of bad Greek etymologies. Perhaps we may translate these names 'the God-born' and 'the little pupil.' In the same dialogue Tichipedio seems to be 'the youth of fortune.'

<sup>121</sup> See *Revival of Learning*, p. 484.

<sup>122</sup> *Op. Volg.* iii. 179.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.* p. 186.

with a magnificent picture of human frailty, leading up to a discourse on death.

It is noticeable that Alberti, though frequently approaching the subject of religion, never dilates upon it, and in no place declares himself a Christian. His creed is that of the Roman moralists—a belief in the benignant Maker of the Universe, an intellectual and unsubstantial theism. We feel this even in that passage of the 'Famiglia' when Gianozzo and his wife pray in their bed-chamber to God for prosperity in life and happiness in children.<sup>124</sup> There is not a word about spiritual blessings, no allusion to Christ or Madonna, though a silver statue of the Saint with ivory hands and face is standing in his tabernacle over them<sup>125</sup>—nothing, indeed, to indicate that this grave Florentine couple, whom we may figure to ourselves like Van Eyck's merchant and wife in the National Gallery, were not performing sacrifice and praying to the *Di Lares* of a Roman household. The Renaissance had Latinised even the religious sentiments, and the elder faiths of the middle ages were extinct in the soundest hearts of the epoch.<sup>126</sup>

A third group of Alberti's prose works consists of his essays on the arts.<sup>127</sup> One of these, the Treatise on Painting, was either written in Italian or translated by Alberti soon after its composition in Latin.<sup>128</sup> The Treatises on Perspective, Sculpture, Architecture and the Orders are supposed to have been rendered by their author from the Latin; but doubt still rests upon Alberti's share in this translation. It is not my present business to inquire into the subject-matter of his artistic essays, but rather to note the fact that Alberti should have thought it fitting to use Italian for at least the most considerable of them. We have already seen that his chief motive to composition was utility, and that he recognised the need of bringing the results of learning within the scope of the unlettered laity. We need not doubt that this consideration weighed with him when he rehandled the matter of Vitruvius and Pliny for the use of handicraftsmen. Nothing is more striking in the whole series than the businesslike simplicity of style, the avoidance of rhetoric, and the adaptation of each section to some practical end. We have not here to do with æsthetical criticism, but with the condensed experience of a student and workman. In his exposition of theory Alberti corresponds to the practice of Florence, where Ghirlandajo kept a *bottega* open to all comers, and Michelangelo began his apprenticeship by grinding colours.

Though the subject of these essays lies beyond the scope of my work, it is impossible to pass over the dedication to Filippo Brunelleschi,

<sup>124</sup> *Op. Volg.* vol. ii. pp. 320-322.

<sup>125</sup> *Il Santo*. Probably S. John.

<sup>126</sup> Alberti in a Letter of Condolement to a friend (*Op. Volg.* v. 357) chooses examples from the Bible. Yet the tone of that most strictly pious of his writings is rather Theistic than Christian.

<sup>127</sup> *Op. Volg.* vol. iv. See, too, Janitschek's edition cited above.

<sup>128</sup> Bonucci believes it was composed in Italian. Janitschek gives reasons for the contrary theory (*op. cit.* p. iii.).

which is prefixed to the Italian version of the 'Pittura.' Alberti begins by saying that the wonder and sorrow begotten in him by reflecting on the loss of many noble arts and sciences, had led him to believe that Nature, wearied and outworn, had no force left to generate the giant spirits of her youth. 'But when I returned from the long exile in which we of the Alberti have grown old, to this our mother city, which exceeds all others in the beauty of her monuments, I perceived that many living men, but first of all you, Filippo, and our dearest friend the sculptor Donatello, and Lorenzo Ghiberti and Luca della Robbia and Masaccio, were not of less account for genius and noble work than any ancient artist of great fame.' After some remarks upon industry and the advantages of scientific theory, he proceeds: 'Who is there so hard and envious of temper as not to praise the architect Filippo, when he saw so vast a structure, raised above the heavens, spacious enough to cover with its shadow all the Tuscan folks, built without any aid from beams and scaffoldings, a miracle of art, if I judge rightly, which might in this age have been deemed impossible, and which even among the ancients was perhaps unknown, undreamed of?' After this exordium, he commits to Brunelleschi's care his little book on painting, *quale a tuo nome feci in lingua toscana*. The interest of this dedication lies not only in the mention of the five chief *quattrocento* artists by Alberti, and in the record of the impression first produced on him by Florence, but also in the recognition that, great as were the dead arts of antiquity, the modern arts of Italy could rival them. It is an intuition parallel to that which induced Alberti to compose the 'Famiglia' in Italian, and proves that he could endure the blaze of humanism without blindness.

In the fourth group of Alberti's prose works we come across a new vein of semi-moral, semi-satirical reflection. These are devoted to love and matrimony, giving rhetorical expression to the misogynistic side of the *Novelle*. Alberti professes himself a master in the lore of love. He knows its symptoms, diagnoses and describes the stages of the malady, and pretends to intimate acquaintance with the foibles of both sexes. Yet we seem to feel that his knowledge is rather literary than real, derived from books and pranked with a scholastic show of borrowed learning. Two lectures, addressed by women to their own sex on the art of love, take the first place in this series. The one is called 'Ecatomfila,' or the lady of the hundred loves; the other 'Amiria,' or the lady of the myriad.<sup>129</sup> The former tells her female audience what kind of lover to choose, neither too young nor too old, not too rich nor yet too handsome; how to keep him, and in what way to make the most of the precious acquisition. She is comparatively modest, and the sort of passion she implies may pass for virtuous. Yet her large experience of men proves she has arrived at wisdom after many trials. Her virtue is a matter of prudent egoism. Amiria takes a different line. Helio-gabalus might have used her precepts in his 'Concio ad Meretrices.' Her discourse turns upon the subsidiary aids to beauty and the arts of

<sup>129</sup> *Op. Volg.* vols. iii. and v.

coquetry. Recipes for hair-dyes, depilatories, eye-lotions, tooth-powders, soaps, lip-salves, ointments, cosmetics, skin-preservers, wart-destroyers, pearl-powders, rouges, are followed up with sound advice about craft, fraud, force, feigned passion, entangling manœuvres, crocodile tears, and secrecy in self-indulgence. The sustained irony of this address, and the minute acquaintance with the least laudable secrets of an Italian lady's toilette it reveals, place it upon the list of literary curiosities. Did any human beings ever plaster their faces with such stuff as Amiria gravely recommends?<sup>130</sup>

The 'Deifira' is a dialogue on the cure of a distempered passion, which adds but little to Ovid's 'Remedium Amoris,' while two short treatises on marriage only prove that Alberti took the old Simonidean view of there being at least nine bad women to one good one.<sup>131</sup> His misogyny, whether real or affected, reaches its climax in an epistle to Paolo Codagnello, which combines the worst things said by Boccaccio in the 'Corbaccio' with Lucian's satire on female uncleanness in the 'Amores.'<sup>132</sup> The tirade appears to be as serious as possible, and, indeed, Alberti's generalities might be illustrated *ad libitum* from the *Novelle*. It is no wonder that women resented his treatment of them; and one of his most amusing lesser tracts is a dialogue between himself and a lady called Sofrona, who took him to task for this very epistle. In answer to her reproaches he is ceremoniously polite. He also gives her the last word in the argument, not without a stroke of humour. 'It is all very well of you, men of letters, to take our characters away, so long as we can rule our husbands and make choice of lovers when and how we choose. All you men run after us; and if you do but see a pretty girl, you stand as stock still as a statue.'<sup>133</sup> After this fashion runs Sofrona's reply.

Alberti's misogynistic essays remind us how very difficult it is to understand or explain the tone of popular literature in that century with regard to women. That the *Novelle* were written to amuse both sexes seems clear; and we must imagine that the women who read so much vituperation of their manners, regarded it as a conventional play with words. Like Sofrona, they knew their satirists to be fair husbands, fathers, brothers, and, in the capacity of lovers, ludicrously blind to their defects. The current abuse of women, in which Petrarch no less than Alberti and Boccaccio indulged, seems to have been a scholastic survival of the coarse and ignorant literature of the mediæval clergy.

<sup>130</sup> Passages in the plays of our own dramatists warn us to be careful how we answer in the negative. But here are some specimens of Amiria's recipes (*op. cit.* v. 282). 'Radice di cocomeri spolverizzata, bollita in orina, usata più di, lieva dal viso panni e rughe. Giovavi sangue di tauro stillato a ogni macula, sterco di colombe in aceto . . . insieme a sterco di cervio . . . lumache lunghe . . . sterco di fanciullo . . . sangue d'anguille.' All these things are recommended, upon one page, for spots on the skin. I can find nothing parallel in the very curious toilette book called *Gli Ornamenti delle Dame, scritti per M. Giov. Marinelli*, Venetia, Valgriso, 1574.

<sup>131</sup> *Op. Volg.* vol. iii. 367; vol. i. 191, 215.

<sup>132</sup> *Op. Volg.* v. 233.

<sup>133</sup> *Op. Volg.* i. 236.

Cloistered monks indulged their taste for obscenity, and indemnified themselves for self-imposed celibacy, by grossly insulting the mothers who bore them and the institution they administered as a sacrament.<sup>134</sup> Their invective tickled the vulgar ear, and passed into popular literature, where it held its own as a commonplace, not credited with too much meaning by folk who knew the world.

The pretty story of Ippolito and Leonora, could we believe it to be Alberti's, might pass for a palinode to these misogynistic treatises.<sup>135</sup> It is the tale of two Florentine lovers, born in hostile houses, and brought, after a series of misadventures, to the fruition of honourable love in marriage. The legend must have been very popular. Besides the prose version, in which the lovers are called Ippolito de' Buondelmonti and Leonora de' Bardi, we have a poem in *ottava rima*, where the heroine's name becomes Dianora. A Latin translation of the same novel was produced by Paolo Cortesi, with the title 'Hyppolyti et Deyaniræ Historia.' But since Alberti's authorship has not been clearly proved, it is more prudent to class both Italian versions among those anonymous products of popular literature which will form the topic of my next chapter.

Of Alberti's poems few survive; and these have no great literary value. Out of the three serious sonnets, one beginning *Io vidi già seder* deserves to be studied for a certain rapidity of movement and mystery of emotion.<sup>136</sup> It might be compared to an allegorical engraving by some artist of the sixteenth century—Robeta or the Master of the Caduceus. Two burlesque sonnets in reply to Burchiello have this interest, that they illustrate a point of literary contact between the people and the cultivated classes. But, on the whole, the Sestines and the 'Elegy of Agiletta' must be reckoned Alberti's best performances in verse.<sup>137</sup> Here his gnomic wisdom finds expression in pregnant, almost epigrammatic utterances. There are passages in the 'Agiletta,' weighty with packed sentences, which remind an English reader of Bacon's lines on human life.<sup>138</sup> Still it is the poetry of a man largely gifted, but not born to be a singer. It may be worth adding to this brief notice of Alberti's rhymes, that he essayed Latin metres in Italian. The following elegiac couplet belongs to him:<sup>139</sup>

Questa per estremo miserabile epistola mando  
A te che spregi miseramente noi.

<sup>134</sup> I may refer to the Latin song against marriage, *Sil Deo gloria* (Du Méril, *Poésies Populaires Latines du Moyen Age*, pp. 179-187), for an epitome of clerical virulence and vileness on this topic.

<sup>135</sup> *Op. Volg.* iii. 274.

<sup>136</sup> *Op. Volg.* v. 352.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 355-359, 367-372.

<sup>138</sup> For example the lines beginning 'Sospetto e cure.' *Ibid.* p. 368.

<sup>139</sup> *Op. Volg.* i. lkv. He was not alone in this experiment. Barbarous Italian sapphics and hexameters are to be found in the *Accademia Coronaria* on Friendship, of which more in the next chapter.



It is not worth printing. But it illustrates that endeavour to fuse the forms of ancient with the material of modern art, which underlay Alberti's practical experiments in architecture.

It may seem that too much attention has already been given to Alberti and his works. Yet when we consider his peculiar position in the history of the Renaissance, when we remember the singular beauty of his character, and reflect that, first among the humanists of mark, he deigned to labour for the public and to cultivate his mother tongue, a certain disproportion in the space allotted him may be excused. What his immediate successors in the field of erudition thought of him, can be gathered from a passage in Poliziano's preface to the first edition of his work on Architecture.<sup>140</sup> 'To praise the author is beyond the narrow limits of a letter, beyond the poor reach of my powers of eloquence. Nothing, however abstruse in learning, however remote from the ordinary range of scholarship, was hidden from his genius. One might question whether he was better fitted for oratory or for poetry, whether his speech was the more weighty or the more polished.' These great qualities Alberti placed freely at the service of the unlettered laity. He is therefore the hero of that age which I have called the period of transition.

In Alberti, moreover, we study the best type of the Italian intellect as it was moulded, on emergence from the middle ages, by those double influences of humanism and fine art which determined the Renaissance. Though his genius was rather artistic than scientific, all problems of nature and of man attracted him; and he dealt freely with them in the spirit of true modern curiosity. His method shows no trace either of mystical theology or of crooked scholasticism. He surveyed the world with a meditative but observant glance, avoiding the deeper questions of ontology, and depicting what he noticed with the realism of a painter. This powerful pictorial faculty made his sketches from contemporary life—the description of the gambler in the 'Deiciarchia,' the portrait of the sage in the 'Teogenio,' the domestic colloquies of Giannozzo with his wife in the 'Famiglia,' the interior of a coquette's chamber in the 'Amiria'—surprising for sincerity and fulness. As a writer, he has the same merit that we recognise in Masaccio and Ghirlandajo among the fresco-painters of that age. But Alberti's touch is more sympathetic, his humanity more loving.

He was not eminent as a metaphysician. From Plato he only borrowed something of his literary art, and something of ethical elevation, leaving to Ficino the mysticism which then passed for Platonic science. His ideal of the virtuous man is a Florentine burgher, honourable but keen in business, open to culture of all kinds, untainted by the cynicism that marred Cosimo de' Medici, lacking the licentious traits of the *Novelle*. Alberti's *Padre di Famiglia* might have stepped from the walls of the Riccardi Chapel or the Choir of S. Maria Novella, in his grave

<sup>140</sup> *De Re Aedificatoria*, Florence, 1485. This preface is a letter addressed to Lorenzo de' Medici.



red *lucco*, with the cold and powerful features. The life praised above all others by Alberti is the life of a meditative student, withdrawn from State affairs, and corresponding with men of a like tranquil nature. This ideal was realised by Sannazzaro in his Mergellina, by Ficino at Monteverchio, by Pico at Querceto. Just as his science and his philosophy were æsthetic, so were his religion and his morality. He conformed to the ceremonies of the Catholic Church. But the religious sentiment had already become in him rational rather than emotional, and less a condition of the conscience than of the artistic sensibility. Honour in men, honesty in women, moved his admiration because they are comely. The splendour of the stars, the loveliness of earth, raised him in thought to the supreme source of beauty. Whatever the genius of man brings to perfection of grace, he called divine, realising for the first time the piety that finds God in the human spirit.<sup>141</sup>

The harmonious lines and the vast spaces of the Florentine Duomo thrilled him like music, merging the charm of art in the high worship of a cultivated nature. 'This temple,' he writes in a passage that might be quoted as the quintessential exposition of his mind,<sup>142</sup> 'has in it both grace and majesty, and I delight to notice that union of slender elegance with full and vigorous solidity, which shows that while every member is designed to please, the whole is built for perpetuity. Inside these aisles there is the climate of eternal spring—wind, frost, and rime without; a quiet and mild air within—the blaze of summer on the square; delicious coolness here. Above all things I delight in feeling the sweetness of those voices busied at the sacrifice, and in the sacred rites our classic ancestors called mysteries. All other modes and kinds of singing weary with reiteration; only religious music never palls. I know not how others are affected; but for myself, those hymns and psalms of the Church produce on me the very effect for which they were designed, soothing all disturbance of the soul, and inspiring a certain ineffable languor full of reverence towards God. What heart of man is so rude as not to be softened when he hears the rhythmic rise and fall of those voices, complete and true, in cadences so sweet and flexible? I assure you that I never listen in these mysteries and funeral ceremonies to the Greek words which call on God for aid against our human wretchedness, without weeping. Then, too, I ponder what power music brings with it to soften us and soothe.'

It would be difficult with greater spontaneity and truth to delineate the emotions stirred in an artistic nature by the services of a cathedral. It is the language, however, not of a devout Christian, but of one who, long before Goethe, had realised the Goethesque ideal of 'living with fixed purpose in the Whole, the Good, the Beautiful.'

<sup>141</sup> 'Quicquid ingenio esset hominum cum quâdam effectum elegantia, id prope divinum dicebat,' says the anonymous biographer. This sentence is the motto of humanism as elaborated by the artistic sense. Its discord with the religion of the middle ages is apparent.

<sup>142</sup> *Op. Volg.* i. 8.

Alberti, both in his width of genius and in his limitations—in his all-embracing curiosity and aptitude for knowledge, his sensitiveness to every charm, his strong practical bias, the realism of his pictures, the objectivity of his style, his indifference to theology and metaphysic, the largeness of his love for all things that have grace, the substitution of æsthetical for moral standards, the purity of his taste, the tranquillity and urbanity of his spirit, his Stoic-Epicurean acceptance of the world where man may be content to dwell and build himself a home of beauty—was a true representative of his age. What attracts us in the bronze-work of Ghiberti, in the bas-reliefs of Della Robbia, in Rossellino's sleeping Cardinal di Portogallo, in Ghirlandajo's portraits and the airy space of Masaccio's backgrounds, in the lives of Ficino and Pomponio Leto, in the dome of Brunelleschi, in the stanzas of Poliziano, arrives at consciousness in Alberti, pervades his writing, and finds unique expression in the fragment of his Latin biography. Yet we must not measure the age of Cosimo de' Medici and Roderigo Borgia by the standard of Alberti. He presents the spirit of the fifteenth century at its very best. Philosophical and artistic sympathy compensate in his religion for that period's lack of pious faith. Its political degradation assumes in him the shape of a fastidious retirement from vulgar strife. Its lawlessness, caprice, and violence are regulated by the motto 'Nothing overmuch' which forms the keystone of his ethics. Its realism is tempered by his love for man and beast and tree—that love which made him weep when he beheld the summer fields and labours of the husbandman. Its sensuality finds no place in his harmonious nature. Many defects of the century are visible enough in Alberti; but what redeemed Italy from corruption and rendered her capable of great and brilliant work amid the chaos of States ruining in infidelity and vice—that free energy of the intellect, open to all influences, inventive of ideas, creative of beauty, which ennobled her Renaissance—burned in him with mild and tranquil radiance.

This is perhaps the fittest place to notice a remarkable book, which, though it cannot be reckoned among the masterpieces of Italian literature, is too important in its bearing on the history of the Renaissance to be passed in silence. The 'Hypnerotomachia Poliphili,' or 'Poliphil's Strife of Love in a Dream,' was written by Francesco Colonna, a Dominican monk, at Treviso in 1467.<sup>143</sup> There is some reason to conjecture that he composed it first in Latin,<sup>144</sup> but when it appeared in print in 1499, it had already assumed the garb of a strange macaronic style, blending the euphuisms of affected rhetoric with phrases culled from humanistic pedantry. The base of the language professes to be Italian; but it is an Italian Latinised in all its elements, and interlarded with

<sup>143</sup> This we learn from the last words of the first edition, 'Tarvisii cum decorissimis Poliae amore lorulis distineretur misellus Poliphilus mccccxvii.' The author's name is given in the initial letters to the thirty-eight chapters of the book.

<sup>144</sup> For this and other points about the *Hypnerotomachia* see Ilg's treatise *Ueber der kunsthistorischen Werth der Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, Wien, Braumüller, 1872.

scraps of Greek and Hebrew. The following description of the Dawn, with which the book opens, may serve as a specimen of its peculiar dialect:<sup>145</sup>

Phoebo in quel hora manando, che la fronte di Matuta Leucothea candidava, fora già dalle Oceane unde, le volubile rote sospese non dimonstrava. Ma sedulo cum gli sui voluceri cavalli, Pyroo primo, & Eoo alquanto apparendo, ad dipingere le lycophe quadrighe della figliola di vermigliante rose, velocissimo inseguentila, non dimorava. Et coruscante già sopra le cerulee & inquiete undule, le sue irradiante come crispulavano. Dal quale adventicio in quel puncto occidua davase la non cornuta Cynthia, solicitando gli dui cavalli del vehiculo suo cum il Mulo, lo uno candido & laltro fusco, trahenti ad lultimo Horizonta discriminante gli Hemisperii pervenuta, & dalla pervia stella aricentare el di, fugata cedeva. In quel tempo quando che gli Rhiphaei monti erano placidi, ne cum tanta rigidicia piu lalgente & frigorifico Euro cum el laterale flando quassabondo el mandava gli teneri ramuli, & ad inquietare gli mobili scirpi & pontuti iunci & debili Cypiri, & advexare gli plichevoli vimini & agitare gli lenti salici, & proclinare la fragile abiete sotto gli corni di Tauro lascivianti. Quanta nel hyberno tempo spirare solea. Similmente el iactabondo Orione cessando di persecuire lachrymoso, lornato humero Taurino delle sete sore.

Whether Francesco Colonna prepared the redaction from which this paragraph is quoted, admits of doubt. A scholar, Leonardo Crasso of Verona, defrayed the cost of the edition. Manutius Aldus printed the volume and its pages were adorned with precious woodcuts, the work of more than one anonymous master of the Lombardo-Venetian school.<sup>146</sup> It was dedicated to Duke Guidobaldo of Urbino.

For the student of Italian literature in its transition from the middle age to the Renaissance, the 'Hypnerotomachia' has special and many-

<sup>145</sup> It ought, however, to be said that, being the first paragraph of the whole book, its style is not so free and simple as in more level passages. Though I do not pretend to understand the meaning clearly, I subjoin a translation.—'Phoebeus advancing at that moment, when the forehead of Matuta Leucothea whitened, already free from Ocean's waves, had not yet shown his whirling wheels suspense. But bent with his swift chargers, Pyroos first and Eoos just disclosed to view, on painting the pale chariot of his daughter with vermeil roses, in most vehement flight pursuing her, made no delay. And sparkling over the azure and unquiet wavelets, his light-showering tresses flowed in curls. Upon whose advent at that point descending to her rest stayed Cynthia without horns, urging the two steeds of her carriage with the Mule, the one white and the other dark, drawing toward the furthest horizon which divides the hemispheres where she had come, and, routed by the piercing star who lures the day, was yielding. At that time when the Rhiphaean mountains were undisturbed, nor with so cold a gust the rigid and frost-creating east-wind with the side-blast blowing made the tender branches quake, and tossed the mobile stems and spiked reeds and yielding grasses, and vexed the pliant tendrils, and shook the flexible willows, and bent the frail fir-branches 'neath the horns of Taurus in their wantonness. As in the winter time that wind was wont to breathe. Likewise the boastful Orion was at the point of staying to pursue with tears the beauteous Taurine shoulder of the seven sisters.'

<sup>146</sup> When the book was translated into French and republished at Paris in the sixteenth century, the blocks were imitated, and at a later epoch it became fashionable to refer them to Raphael. The mistake was gross. Its only justification is the style adopted by the French imitators in their rehandling of the illustrations to Poliphili's soul pleading before Venus. These cuts seem to have felt the influence of the Farnesina frescoes.

sided interest. It shows that outside Florence, where the pure Italian idiom was too vigorous to be suppressed, humanistic fashion had so far taken possession of the literary fancy as to threaten the very existence of the mother tongue. But, more than this, it represents that epoch of transition in its fourfold intellectual craving after the beauty of antiquity, the treasures of erudition, the multiplied delights of art, and the liberty of nature. These cravings are allegorised in a romance of love, which blends mediæval mysticism with modern sensuousness. Like the style, the matter of the book is maccaronic, parti-coloured and confused; but the passion which controls so many elements is genuine and simple. The spirit of the earlier Renaissance reflects itself, as in a mirror, in the *Dream of Poliphil*. So essentially is it the product of a transitional moment that when the first enthusiasm for its euphuistic pedantry and æsthetical rapture had subsided, the key to its most obvious meaning was lost. In the preface to the fourth French edition (1600), Beroald de Verville hinted that the volume held deep alchemistic secrets for those who could discover them. After this distortion, the book passed into not altogether unmerited oblivion. It had done its work for the past age. It now remains an invaluable monument for those who would fain reconstruct the century which gave it birth.

The '*Hypnerotomachia*' professes to relate its author's love for Polia, a nun, his search after her, and their union, at the close of sundry trials and adventures, in the realm of Venus. Poliphil dreams that he finds himself in a wild wood, where he is assailed by monstrous beasts, and suffers great distress of mind. He prays to Diespiter, and comes forth-with into a pleasant valley, through which he wanders in the hope of finding Polia. At the outset of his journey he meets five damsels, Aphea, Offressia, Orassia, Achoe, Geussia, who conduct him to their queen, Eleuterilyda.<sup>147</sup> She understands his quest, and assigns the maidens, Logistica and Thelemia, to be his guides into the palace of Telosia. They journey together and arrive at the abode of Dame Telosia, which has three gates severally inscribed in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin characters with legends, the meaning whereof is God's Glory, Mother of Love, and Worldly Glory. Poliphil enters the first door, and finds the place within but little to his liking. Then he tries the third, and is no better pleased. Lastly he gains admittance to the demesne of Love's Mother, where he is content to stay. Lovely and lascivious maidens greet him kindly; and while he surrenders to their invitation, one of his attendants, Logistica, takes her flight. He is left with his beloved Thelemia to enjoy the pleasures of this enchanting region.

Thus far the allegory is not hard to read. Poliphil, or the lover of

<sup>147</sup> Here is the description of Poliphil's reception by the damsels '*Respose una lepidula placidamente dicendo. Da mi la mano. Hora si tu sospite & il bene venuto. Nui al presento siamo cinque sociale comite come il vedi, Et io me chiamo Aphea. Et questa che porta li buxuli & gli bianchissimi linteamini, e nominata Offressia. Et quest'altra che dil splendente speculo (delitie nostre) e gerula, Orassia e il suo nome. Costei che tene la sonora lyra, e dicta Achoe. Questa ultima, che questo vaso di pretiosissimo liquore baiula, ha nome Geussia.*'

Polia, escapes from the perils of the forest where his earlier life was passed, by petition to the Father of Gods and Men. He places himself in the hands of the five senses, who conduct him to freewill. Freewill appoints for his further guidance reason and inclination, who are to lead him to the final choice of lives. When he arrives at the point where this choice has to be made, he perceives that God, the world, and beauty, who is mother of love, compete for his willing service. He rejects religion and ambition; and no sooner has his preference for love and beauty been avowed, than the reasoning faculty deserts him, and he is abandoned to inclination.

While Poliphil is dallying with the nymphs of pleasure and his own wanton will, he is suddenly abandoned by these companions, and pursues his journey alone.<sup>148</sup> Before long, however, he becomes aware of a maiden, exceedingly fair to look upon, who carries in her hand a lighted torch. With her for guide, he passes through many pleasant places, arriving finally at the temple of Venus Physizoe. This maiden, though as yet he cannot recognise her, is the Polia he seeks, and on their way together he feels the influences of her love-compelling beauty. They enter the chapel of Venus, and are graciously received by the prioress who guards that sanctuary. Mystical rites of initiation and consecration are performed. Polia lays down her torch, and is discovered by her lover. Then they are wedded by grace of the abiding goddess; and having undergone the ceremony of spousal, they resume their wanderings together. They pass through a desolate city of tombs and ruins, named Polyandrion, where are the sepulchres and epitaphs of lovers. Here, too, they witness the pangs of souls tormented for their crimes against the deity of Love. Afterwards they reach a great water, where Cupid's barge comes sailing by, and takes them to the island of Cythera. It is a level land of gardens, groves and labyrinths, adorned with theatres and baths, and watered by a mystic fount of Venus. Near the tomb of Adonis in this demesne of Love, Polia and Poliphil sit down to rest among the nymphs, and Polia relates the story of their early passion.

It is here, if anywhere, that we come across reality in this romance. Polia tells how the town of Treviso was founded, and of what illustrious lineage she came, and how she vowed herself to the service of Diana when the plague was raging in the city. In Dian's temple Poliphil first saw her, and fainted at the sight, and she, made cruel by the memory

<sup>148</sup> A portion of the passage describing this dalliance may be extracted as a further specimen of the author's style: 'Cum lascivi vultu, et gli pecti procaci, ochii blandienti et nella rosea fronte micanti e ludibondi. Forme prae-excellente, Habiti incentivi, Moventie puellare, Risguardi mordenti, Exornato mundissimo. Niuna parte simulata, ma tutto dalla natura perfectio, cum exquisita politione, Niente difforme ma tutto harmonia concinnissima, Capi flavi cum le trece biondissime e crini insolari tante erano bellissime complicate, cum cordicelle, o vero nextruli di seta e di fili doro intorte, quanto che in tutto la operatione humana excedevano, circa la testa cum egregio componimento inviluppate e cum achi crinali detente, e la fronte di cincinni capreoli silvata, cum lascivula inconstantia praeependenti.' There is an obvious study of Boccaccese phrase, with a no less obvious desire to improve upon its exquisiteness of detail, masking an incapacity to write connectedly.

of her vows, left him upon the temple floor for dead. But when she returned home, a vision of women punished for their hard heart smote her conscience; and her old nurse, an adept in the ways of love, counselled her to seek the Prioress of Venus, and confess, and enter into reconciliation with her lover. What the nurse advised, Polia did, and in the temple of Venus she met Poliphil. He, while his body lay entranced upon the floor of Dian's church, had visited the heavens in spirit and obtained grace from Venus and Cupid. Therefore, the twain were now of one accord, and ready to be joined in bonds of natural affection. At the end of Polia's story, the nymphs leave both lovers to enjoy their new-found happiness. But here the power of sleep is spent, and Poliphil, awakened by the song of swallows, starts from dreams with 'Farewell, my Polia!' upon his lips.

Such is the frail and slender basis of romance, corresponding in the details of Polia's narrative to an ordinary *Novella*, upon which the bulky edifice of the 'Hypnerotomachia' is built. This love-story, while it gives form to the book, is clearly not the author's main motive. What really concerns him most deeply is the handling of artistic themes, which, though introduced by way of digressions, occupy by far the larger portion of his work. The 'Hypnerotomachia' is an encyclopædia of curious learning, a treasure-house of æsthetical descriptions and discussions, vividly reflecting the two ruling enthusiasms of the earlier Renaissance for scholarship and art. Minute details of inexhaustible variety, bringing before our imagination the architecture, sculpture and painting of the fifteenth century, its gardens, palaces and temples, its processions, triumphs and ceremonial shows, its delight in costly jewels, furniture, embroidery and banquets, its profound feeling for the beauty of women, and its admiration for the goodness of athletic manhood, are massed together with bewildering profusion. Not one of the technical arts which flourished in the dawn of the Renaissance but finds due celebration here; and the whole is penetrated with that fervent reverence for antiquity which inspired the humanists. Yet the 'Hypnerotomachia,' though sometimes tedious, is never frigid. With the precision of a treatise and the minuteness of an inventory, it combines the ardour of impassioned feeling, the rapture of anticipation, the artist's blending with the lover's ecstasy. It is a dithyramb of the imagination, inflamed by no Oriental lust of mere magnificence, but by the fine sense of what is beautiful in form, rare in material, just in proportion, exquisite in workmanship.

Whether the 'Hypnerotomachia' exercised a powerful influence over the productions of the Italian genius, can be doubted. But that it presents an epitome or figured abstract of the Renaissance in its earlier luxuriance, is unmistakable. Reading it, we wander through the collections of Paul II., rich with jewels, *intagli*, cameos and coins; we enter Amadeo's chapels, Filarete's palaces, Bramante's peristyles and *loggie*; we pace the gardens of the Brenta and the Sforza's deer-parks at Pavia; we watch Lorenzo's Florentine *trionfi* and Pietro Riario's festivals in



Rome; Giorgione's *fêtes champêtres* are set for us in framework of the choicest fruits and flowers; we hear Ciriaco of Ancona discoursing on his epigraphs and broken marbles; before our eyes, as in a gallery, are ranged the bas-reliefs of Donatello wrought in bronze, Mantegna's triumphs, Signorelli's arabesques, the terra-cotta of the Lombard and the stucco of the Roman schools, the carved-work of Alberti's church at Rimini, the *tarsiatura* of Fra Giovanni da Verona's choir-stalls, doorways from Milanese and chimneys from Urbino palaces, Vatican tapestries and trellis-work of beaten iron from Prato—all that the Renaissance in its bloom produced, is here depicted with the wealth and warmth of fancy doting on anticipated beauties.

Of the author, Francesco Colonna, very little is known, except that he was born in 1433 at Venice, that he attached himself to Ermolao Barbaro, spent a portion of his manhood in the Dominican cloister of S. Niccolò at Treviso, and died at Venice in 1527. Whether the love-tale of the 'Hypnerotomachia' had a basis of reality, or whether we ought to regard it wholly from the point of view of allegory, cannot be decided now. It is, however, probable that a substratum of experience underlay the vast mass of superimposed erudition and enthusiastic reverie. The references to Polia's name and race; her epitaph appended to the first edition; the details of her narrative, which somewhat break the continuity of style and introduce a biographical element into the romance; the very structure of the allegory which assigns so large a part in life to sensuous instinct—all these points seem to prove that Poliphilus was moved by memory of what had really happened, no less than by the desire to express a certain mood of feeling and belief. Such mingling of actual emotion with ideal passion in a work of imagination, dedicated to a woman who is also an emblem, was consistent with the practice of mediæval poets. Polia belongs, under altered circumstances, to the same class as Beatrice. The hypothesis that, whoever she may have been, she had become for her lover a metaphor of antique beauty, is sufficiently attractive and plausible. If we adopt this theory, we must interpret the dark wood where Poliphilus first found himself, to mean the anarchy of Gothic art; while his emancipation through the senses and Thelemia characterises the spirit in which the Italians achieved the Revival. The extraordinary care lavished upon details, interrupting the course of the romance and withdrawing our sympathy from Polia, meet from this point of view with justification. Veiling his enthusiasm for the nascent past beneath the fiction of a novel, Francesco Colonna invests the lady of his intellectual choice, the handmaid of Aphrodite, evoked from the sepulchre where arts and sciences lie buried, with rich Renaissance trappings of elaborate device. Beneath those exuberant arabesques, within that labyrinth of technically perfect details, suave outlines, delicate contours devoid of content, a real woman would be lost. But if Polia be not merely a woman, if she be, as her name *πολίς* seems to indicate, at the same time the vision of resurgent classic beauty, then the setting which her lover has contrived is ade-



quate to the influences which inspired him. The multiform and laboured framework of his picture acquires a meaning from the spirit of the goddess whom he worships, and the presiding genius of his age dwells in a shrine, each point of which is brilliant with the splendour which that spirit radiates.

It is, therefore, as an allegory of the Renaissance, conscious of its destiny and strongest aspirations in the person of an almost nameless monk, that we should read the 'Hypnerotomachia.' Still, even so, the mark of indecision, which rests upon the many twy-formed masterpieces of this century, is here discernible. Francesco Colonna has one foot in the middle ages, another planted on the firm ground of the modern era. He wavers between the psychological realism of romance and the philosophical idealism of allegory. Polia is both too much and too little of a woman. At one time her personality seems as distinct as that of any heroine of fiction; at another we lose sight of her in the mist of symbolism. Granting, again, that she is a metaphor, she lends herself to more than one conception. She is both an emblem of passion, sanctified by nature, and liberated from the bondage of asceticism, and also an emblem of ideal beauty, recovered from the past, and worshipped by a scholar-artist.

This confusion of motives and uncertainty of aim, while it detracts from the artistic value of the 'Hypnerotomachia,' enhances its historical importance. In form, the book has to be classed with the Visions of the middle ages—the 'Divine Comedy,' the 'Amorosa Visione,' and the 'Quadriregio.' But though the form is mediæval, the inspiration of this prose-poem is quite other. We have seen already how Francesco Colonna, travelling in search of Polia, prayed to Jupiter, and how the senses and freewill guided him to the satisfaction of his deepest self in the service of Beauty. It is in the temple of Venus Physizoe (Venus the procreative source of life in Nature) that he meets with his love and is wedded to her in the bonds of mutual desire.<sup>149</sup> Christianity is wholly, we might say systematically, ignored. The ascetic standpoint of the middle age is abandoned for another, antagonistic to its ruling impulses. A new creed, a new cult, are introduced. Polia, whether we regard her as the poet's mistress or as the spirit of antiquity which has enamoured him, is won by worship paid to deities of natural appetite. In its essence, then, the 'Hypnerotomachia' corresponds to the most fruitful instinct of the Renaissance—to that striving after emancipation which restored humanity to its heritage in the realms of sense and reason. Old ideals, exhausted and devoid of vital force, are exchanged for fresh and beautiful reality. The spirituality of the past, which has become consumptive and ineffective by lapse of time and long familiarity, yields to vigorous animalism. The cloister is quitted for the world, religious for artistic ecstasy, celestial for earthly paradise, scholasticism

<sup>149</sup> The reiteration of sensuous phrases is significant. These inscriptions, *παντων τοκαδι, παν δει ποιειν κατα την αυτου φυσιν, γονος και ευφυλια*, together with the Triumphs of Priapus and Cupid, accord with the supremacy of Venus Physizoe.

for humane studies, the ascetic for the hedonistic rule of conduct. Criticised according to its deeper meaning, the 'Hypnerotomachia' is the poem of which Valla's 'De Voluptate' was the argument, of which Lorenzo de' Medici's life was the realisation, and the life of Aretino the caricature. If it assumes the form of a vision, reminding us thereby that the author was born upon the confines of the middle ages and the modern era, it deals with the vision in no Dantesque spirit, but with the geniality of Apuleius. Allegory is but a transparent veil, to make the nudity of natural impulse fascinating. As in Boccaccio, so here the hymn of *il talento*, simple appetite, is sung; but the fusion of artistic and humanistic enthusiasms with this ground-motive adds peculiar quality, distinctive of the later age which gave it birth.

The secret of its charm, which, indeed, it shares with earlier Renaissance art in general, is that this yearning after freedom has been felt with rapture, but not fully satisfied. The season of repletion and satiety is distant. Venus Physizoe appears to Francesco Colonna radiant above all powers of heaven or earth, because he is a monk and may not serve her. Had he his whole will, she might have been for him Venus Volgivaga, and he the author of another 'Puttana Errante.' Nor has she yet assumed the earnest mask of science. This element of unassuaged desire, indulged in longings and outgoings of the fancy, this recognition of man's highest good and happiness in nature by one who has forsworn allegiance to the laws of nature, adds warmth to his emotion and penetrates his pictures with a kind of passion. The arts and scholarship, which divide the empire of his soul with beauty, have no less attraction of romance than love itself. Nor are they separated in his mind from nature. Nature and antiquity, knowledge and desire, the reverence for abstract beauty and the instincts of a lover, are fused in one enthusiasm. Thus Francesco Colonna makes us understand how Italy used both art and erudition as instruments in the liberation of human energies. For the thinkers and actors of that period, antiquity and the plastic arts were aids to the recovery of a paradise from which man had been exiled. They could not dissociate the conception of nature from studies which revealed their human dignity and freedom, or from arts whereby they expressed their vivid sense of beauty. The work they thus inaugurated, had afterwards to be continued by the scientific faculties.

One word may finally be said about the peculiar delicacy of this book. The 'Hypnerotomachia' is no less an apotheosis of natural appetite than the 'Amorosa Visione.' But it is more sentimental and imaginative, because its author had not Boccaccio's crude experience. It anticipates the art of the great age—the art of Cellini and Giulio Romano, goldsmith-sculptors and palace-builders; but it is more refined and passionate, because its author enjoyed those beauties of consummate craft in reverie instead of practice. It interprets the enthusiasm of Ciriaco and Poggio, discoverers of manuscripts, decipherers of epigraphs; but it is more *naïf* and graceful than their work of erudition, because

its author dealt freely with his learning and subordinated scholarship to fancy. In short the 'Hypnerotomachia' is a foreshadowing of the Renaissance in its prime—the spirit of the age foreseen in dreams, embodied in imagination, purged of material alloy, and freed from the encumbrances of actuality.

